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Abstract of Thesis

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Title of thesis SUBJECTIVITY IN WOMEN WRITERS' CONTEMPORARY ARABIC SHORT STORIES

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This thesis examines the development of female subjectivities as presented in the short stories of women writers who started writing in Arabic in the second half of the 20th century in Egypt and the Levant (represented by Lebanon, Syria and Palestine), Iraq and the Gulf (represented by United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia)and North Africa (represented by Morocco and Tunisia). My theoretical approach draws on the theories of subjectivity elaborated by Michel Foucault, Simone de Beauvoir and other critical re-elaborations of Foucauldian concepts by several theorists of gender.

This thesis aims at filling some of the lacunae in the available studies of Arab women literary achievements, which tend to be scarce, geographically limited, and concentrated on few famous names, dealing mostly with the novel and history of literature. Therefore the geographical area covered is extensive, showing the cultural, social and political variety of Arab countries against its mass media image of a monolithic whole. Whenever possible the authors have been selected among the younger, little known or translated women writers. The focus on the short story rather than the novel provides an insight into a dynamic area of Arab women's literary production which is widely understudied. Selecting subjectivity enables the study to move from the phase of history of literature to a deeper critical appreciation of women's literary achievements. Moreover subjectivity allows one to meet and hear the voices of female subjects with differences, opinions, sexualities, and so forth, and hence overcomes the many stereotypes diffused by mass media about 'Muslim women', transformed into a homogeneous, ahistorical and universalised category.

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Subjectivity in Women Writers' Contemporary Arabic Short Stories

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PhD degree in Modern Arabic Literature

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Abstract

This thesis examines the development of female subjectivities as presented in the short stories of women writers who started writing in Arabic in the second half of the 20th century in Egypt and the Levant (represented by Lebanon, Syria and Palestine), Iraq and the Gulf (represented by United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia) and North Africa (represented by Morocco and Tunisia). My theoretical approach draws on the theories of subjectivity elaborated by Michel Foucault, Simone de Beauvoir and other critical re-elaborations of Foucauldian concepts by several feminist theorists.

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INTRODUCTION

APPROACHES TO SUBJECTIVITY

The main focus of this thesis is the subject as it appears in the short stories of women writers who started writing from the 1960's onwards in several Arab countries in Levant, Gulf and North Africa and who are not widely read and/or translated in Europe. Among the wide array of theories about the subject and subjectivity, I have elected as my major heuristic tool the theories elaborated by Michel Foucault (1926-84), which will be integrated with the help of Simone de Beauvoir (1908-86) and several feminist theorists in order to transform Foucault's sexless subject into a sexed one.[1] I will expound the key theoretical concepts that will be recurrent in this thesis later on in this introduction, after having explained the reasons behind my choice of genre, period, authors, countries, topic, and critical theories.

The short story seems to me the ideal genre to study female subjectivity because of its interconnection with self, marginality and femininity that will be explained in chapter one. It is also a genre that critics widely neglect in favour of novels, despite its popularity in all Arab countries, which hence needs

[1] I have made the conscious choice of using the word 'sex' and its derivatives rather than 'gender' in this thesis, which is about Arabic literature and based on French philosophy, because in Arabic and French a separate word distinguishing gender from sex does not exist. Both meanings are covered in Arabic by the word 'jins' and in French by the word 'sexe'. With my choice I share (and extend to the Arabic context) Braidotti's opinion that 'the sex/gender distinction, which is one of the pillars on which English-speaking feminist theory is built, makes neither epistemological nor political sense in many non-English, western European contexts' [Judith Butler's interview with Rosi Braidotti 'Feminism by Any Other Name', *differences: a Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 6:2, (1994), pp. 37-8]. The word 'gender' will appear when I quote and discuss sources in which it is used.

further critical attention. It also serves my purpose to depict a wider and more exhaustive picture of women writers' literary productions, because its condensed form enables me to carefully examine more specimens than the novel's extended form would allow.

The period selected has been determined by the fact that the short story by women writers had not reached maturity in most Arab countries and had not even appeared in some countries before the 1960's, as it will be shown in chapter one. Whenever possible I have concentrated on younger authors, mostly disengaged from the nationalist agenda that could divert their attention away from the subject, and who have benefited from the maturity the genre has acquired thanks to their predecessors' experiments. I have also favoured authors less translated into European languages, whenever I could source their collections, because they can open up new communication routes with Arabic literature that are not the ones sustained by translation and editorial strategies of power and marketing.[2]

I have specified that I will select short stories written in Arabic because I will exclude the francophone literature of Maghreb and Lebanon, whose representatives are already making a statement about themselves and their subjectivities by refusing to write in their mother tongue in the period under examination.

As regards the selection of countries, it would have been difficult to exclude Egypt, since it has been the cradle of the Arabic short story and of its various trends[3] and still offers remarkable examples of the genre, such as Nūrā Amīn's stories. In the case of the other Levantine countries I have selected Syria and Lebanon mainly for their several outstanding modernist short story writers, among whom Nādiyā Khūst and Hādiyā Sa°īd, and Palestine for its excellent realist short stories, which have influenced Liyānah Badr. Lebanon and Palestine have been selected also because I wanted to

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[2] Amal Amireh and Lisa Suhair Majaj have clearly exposed the combination of economic, discursive and literary forces governing the whole process of selection, translation, packaging, advertising and distribution of literary works by "Third World Women". See Amal Amireh, and Lisa Suhair Majaj (eds.). *Going Global: the Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers*. (New York; London: Garland Publishing, 2000), pp. 4-6.

[3] This and the other claims I make in this paragraph regarding the history of the short story in the countries considered will be expounded in chapter one.

investigate any probable traces of their recent dramatic history left in the short stories selected. In the Gulf region Iraq was chosen because with Egypt it was the only country in which women pioneered the short story already in the 1930's, with Daisy al-Amīr presenting a wealth of texts relevant to my topic.[4] The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia have been selected for the popularity of the genre among women writers, Emirati Salmā Maṭar Sayf for the noticeable critical attention she attracted and Saudi Badriyyah al-Bishr for the medals King Saud University awarded her. The proliferation of female short story writers in Morocco and Tunisia has motivated their selection among the Maghrebian countries, with Rabīᶜah Rīḥān as an outstanding Moroccan author that offers much material from which to choose, and Tunisian Rashīdah al-Turkī and Ḥayāh al-Rāyyis as the only contemporary Tunisian authors I could trace offering material relevant to this thesis.[5]

As indicated by Suha Sabbagh[6] and Fadia Faqir,[7] systematic studies of Arab women literary achievements are needed, since the existing ones are scarce, geographically limited, usually treat only famous names or mainly history of literature. New studies are needed also to overcome the colonial stereotype of Arab women as voiceless victims clad in black that mass media still inflict on us and politicians cynically manipulate.[8] The focus on subjectivity, one of the unexplored topics in Arabic literature, and the wide spectrum of countries considered in this thesis should allow to overcome the phase of the history of literature and this stereotype to perceive a plurality of images, some of which contradict the stereotype.

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[4] Although al-Amīr is not a young writer anymore, the younger writers whose texts I could source (Ibtisām ᶜAbd Allah and Maysalūn Hādī) did not produce texts relevant to my topic.

[5] See introduction to chapter four for more details.

[6] Suha Sabbagh (ed.). *Arab Women: Between Defiance and Restraint*. (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1996).

[7] Fadia Faqir (ed.). *In the House of Silence: Autobiographical Essays by Arab Women Writers*. (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 1998).

[8] On this stereotype's origins and implications see Edward Said. *Orientalism*. (London: Penguin Books, 2003), groundbreaking work on the subject. Many other works on this subject are quoted in Jasmin Zine. 'Muslim Women and the Politics of Representation', *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 19:4, (2002), pp. 1-22, which discusses the existence of the stereotype also in Western feminist literature and modern advertising and how the terrorist attacks of 2001 in USA have affected it.

I chose to use Foucauldian theories about subject and subjectivity for: a) the great depth and length with which Foucault explored the modes of subjectivation. b) His genealogical method of analysis, greatly influenced by Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, which was innovative because through it he questioned and tested universals and humanistic assumptions, examining their historical developments, and did not accept them if not indispensable. One of the humanistic assumptions to undergo such process was the subject, which for Foucault ceased to be foundation of all knowledge, while he investigated the concrete historical practices, i.e. ways of acting and thinking, that brought the subject into existence. c) The evolution present in Foucault's thought and in particular in his notion of the subject that enlarges the field of application of his theory. d) His conception of power, resistance and power/knowledge relation, which will be introduced later, that I consider very pertinent to the modern economies of power visible in our societies, and his notion of sexuality as developing within historically specific power relations.

1) The Foucauldian theoretical background

It is worth examining the origins of the word 'subject' and how it has been used in the philosophical domain to better place the novelty of Foucault's definition of the word. The word 'subject' derives from the Latin *subiectus*: that which is thrown under, intended «as a prior support or more fundamental stratum upon which other qualities, such as predicates, [..] may be based. *Subiectus* translates the Greek *hupokeimenon*, "that which lies under," "the substratum"».[9] *Hupokeimenon* for Aristotle was the founding principle on which all other entities were based and through which all entities became intelligible. In English the word 'subject' has evolved from the Middle Ages meaning of an independently existing entity or acted upon object to the philosophical meaning of thinking subject, which appeared for the first time at the end of the eighteenth century. Heidegger considered the peculiar feature

[9] Simon Critchley and Peter Dew (eds.). *Deconstructive Subjectivities*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 13.

of modern philosophy after Descartes the establishment of the human being, now a *res cogitans* (a thinking thing), as the Aristotelian *hupokeimenon*, the ultimate foundation of the intelligibility of entities, therefore replacing deities and substances existing outside of her/his intellect. With the conception of the subject as a *res cogitans* the subject is defined as conscious, as the one who is thinking.

Ute Guzzoni instead defines the word *hupokeimenon* as 'a ground of determination, but precisely not as an active ground, not as the "determining" itself, but as that which is determined, that which takes on determinations.'[10] *Hupokeimenon* was distinguished from the human *logos*[11] that thinks the determinations and from the *eidos* (form) that shapes them. In modern philosophy *logos* and *eidos* coincide: the subject becomes what thinks the determinations and gives form to matter, and hence determines and dominates, primarily because of its rationality. Guzzoni wonders if this determining subject is an illusion of modern philosophers, such as Heidegger, for whom 'subjects are those who set themselves up as measure'.[12]

Foucault's conception of the subject has more in common with the way Guzzoni defines the word *hupokeimenon* than with the *subjectum* of modern philosophers. In fact in an interview first appeared in 1982 Foucault gave the word 'subject' two meanings: 'subject subdued to the other by control and dependence, and subject attached to his own identity by the consciousness or knowledge of his self. In both cases, this word suggests a form of power that subjugates and subjects.'[13] We are not in the presence of a determining subject, but of an individual that is made subject, as it will be better explained later. In the same interview he described his research as treating 'the three modes of objectification that transform human beings into subjects': 1) the mode of sciences such as grammar, biology or economy, whose object of knowledge is respectively the speaking, the living and the productive subject,

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[10] *Ibid.* p. 202.
[11] The word *logos* in this instance refers to reason, but it has several meanings in philosophy, rhetoric and Christian theology.
[12] Simon Critchley and Peter Dew (eds.). *Op. cit.*, p. 203.
[13] 'sujet soumis à l'autre par le contrôle et la dépendance, et sujet attaché à sa propre identité par la conscience ou la connaissance de soi. Dans les deux cas, ce mot suggère une forme de pouvoir qui subjugue et assujettit.' Michel Foucault. *Dits et Écrits II, 1976-1988.* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), p. 1046. All translations are mine.

which was analysed in *Les Mots et les Choses*; 2) the mode of the 'dividing practices'[14] that transform the subject into an object by dividing it internally and from others, as it happens in psychiatric, clinical and penal institutions, which he studied in *Histoire de la Folie, Naissance de la Clinique, Surveiller et Punir*; 3) the mode of the human being that transforms her/himself into a subject, and in *Histoire de la Sexualité* he studied in particular how a human being sees her/himself as subject of a sexuality. Before expounding on the different subjects resulting from these three modes of objectification I would like to briefly define other Foucauldian concepts that will recur in this thesis.

While describing the purpose of his research, Foucault stated that he wanted to study 'the constitution of the subject as object for himself', i.e. the procedures of self-observation, self-analysis and so forth; in other words he wanted to study subjectivity, defined as 'the manner in which the subject experiences himself in a game of truth in which he is in relation with his self.'[15] Foucault called 'games of truth' the a priori forms that discourses about certain things take and that make these discourses classifiable as true or false. It should not be forgotten that by the word 'truth' Foucault does not mean 'the set of true things that are to be discovered or made accepted, but the set of rules by which true is disentangled from false and specific effects of power are assigned to true'.[16] Subjectivation is consequently defined as 'the process through which one obtains the constitution of a subject, or rather of a subjectivity, which is obviously only one of the given possibilities to organise self-consciousness'[17] and Foucault underlined how important sexuality was in the formation of subjectivity in the West, for reasons that will be explored later. He deemed it dangerous to consider subjectivity and identity as something natural and deep, since for him they were determined by political and social

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[14] 'trois modes d'objectivation qui transforment les êtres humains en sujets'; 'pratiques divisantes'. *Ibid.* p. 1042.

[15] 'la constitution du sujet comme objet pour lui-même', 'la manière dont le sujet fait expérience de lui-même dans un jeu de vérité où il a rapport à soi.' *Ibid.* p. 1452; 1984 text.

[16] 'l'ensemble des choses vraies qu'il y a à découvrir ou à faire accepter, mais l'ensemble des règles selon lesquelles on démêle le vrai du faux et on attache au vrai des effets spécifiques de pouvoir'. *Ibid.* p. 159; 1977 interview.

[17] 'le processus par lequel on obtient la constitution d'un sujet, plus exactement d'une subjectivité, qui n'est évidemment que l'une des possibilités données d'organisation d'une conscience de soi'. *Ibid.* p. 1525; 1984 interview.

factors, which explains why he incited people to break free of psychoanalytical subjectivity and to change their subjectivities.[18]

Apart from appearing politically and economically determined, identity is not clearly defined. In an interview dated 1979 Foucault described the search for identity as striving for knowing who we are, the effort to form a certain consciousness of oneself.[19] Identity in his writings comes across as a limitation: referring to his political experiences after the Second World War, he stated in a 1980 interview that he was looking for 'experiences in which the subject could dissociate himself, sever his relation with himself and lose his identity';[20] in a 1984 interview he defined identity as useful (and sexual identity in particular as politically very useful) if it is a game that encourages social and sexual relations, but it is a limitation if we consider it a universal ethical norm that rules our lives and that induces us to constantly wonder if our actions conform to it, because the relations with our selves must be relationships of differentiation and creation rather than identity.[21] Identity is also presented as invented by the self,[22] fixed, kept or transformed by the individual through the techniques of the self, which will be introduced later, in order to achieve certain goals,[23] therefore once again constructed.

Coming to the concept of the self (*soi*), I have noticed that this word is much more recurrent than the words subject/subjectivity in *L'Usage des Plaisirs* and *Le Souci de Soi*, which could be linked to the fact that in Greek philosophy there was no theory of the subject and the subject was not an object of knowledge.[24] The self was probably the way to conceptualise human interiority in the Greek and Greco-Roman cultures before humanist subject/subjectivity arose (see p. 19 below). Referring to the Greek conception

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[18] Statements from a 1980 interview; see *Ibid.* pp. 856-7. As it will be discussed later subjectivity for Foucault was an effect of power.
[19] *Ibid.* p. 785.
[20] 'expériences dans lesquelles le sujet puisse se dissocier, briser le rapport avec lui-même, perdre son identité'. *Ibid.* p. 869.
[21] *Ibid.* p. 1558.
[22] See the 1971 essay 'Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire' in Michel Foucault. *Dits et Écrits I, 1954-1975.* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), p. 1009.
[23] Foucault used this definition in the opening speech of the academic year 1980-1 at the Collège de France, reproduced in *Dits et Écrits II,* pp. 1032-7.
[24] This is what Foucault stated in an interview published in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* three days after his death, reproduced in *Ibid.* p. 1525.

of the self in the classical period (500-323 B.C.), Foucault defined it as 'a self to construct and to create like a work of art'[25] and he commented that the 'recounting of the self', that is to say writing what one had heard, read and thought, was considered very important because it was a way 'to gather what one could hear or read in a drawing that is nothing else but the constitution of oneself'.[26]

The last concept I would like to introduce here is that of individualisation, which Foucault used to indicate a technique to accentuate the features that make a human being an individual, that distinguish him/her from others, in order to categorise and isolate the individual from others and lock him/her in his/her identity, so that she/he withdraws into him/herself. This tactic is widely employed by modern states and old and new institutions in order to guarantee the governability of individuals, as we will see later.

I will now proceed with the close examination of the different subjects as presented in *Les Mots et les Choses*, *Surveiller et Punir*, and the three tomes of *Histoire de la Sexualité*.

'Avant la fin du XVIII[e] siècle, l'*homme* n'existait pas.'[27] This is what Foucault declared provokingly in his 1966 work *Les Mots et les Choses*, adding that it was the demiurgic work of knowledge that had fabricated the human being only 200 years before. He maintained that, although before the end of the 18th century natural sciences had studied the human being as a species or race, a science of the human being as such had no place in the *episteme*[28] of the classical period (second half 17th century), in which the human being was not considered a natural being like others, despite its human nature, nor a being that could know nature and know itself as a natural being

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[25] 'un soi à construire et à créer comme une œuvre d'art'. *Ibid.* p. 1443.

[26] 'de rassembler ce que l'on pouvait entendre ou lire, et cela dans un dessein qui n'est pas autre chose que la constitution de soi-même.' *Ibid.* p. 1444.

[27] 'Before the end of the 18th century the *human being* did not exist.' Michel Foucault. *Les Mots et les Choses: Une Archéologie des Sciences Humaines.* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), p. 319. I have translated 'homme' with 'human being' and not 'man' because in contemporary English the word 'man' is mainly used to indicate a male, while in French the word 'homme' can be used also to indicate a generic human being.

[28] In a 1972 interview Foucault defined *episteme* as follows: 'Ce sont tous ces phénomènes de rapports entre les sciences ou entre les différents discours dans les divers secteurs scientifiques qui constituent ce que j'appelle épistémè d'une époque.' Foucault. *Dits et Écrits I,* p. 1239. He gives the example of historians and psychologists using the theory of evolution.

within it. At the time the human being was only conceived 'sovereign subject of all possible knowledge',[29] not a possible object of knowledge. In the place that he was later to occupy there was a discourse that organised the empirical world with its representations of things that reflected the order of things.[30] It was when the classical episteme with its conception of language and representation and its discourse disappeared between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century that 'the human being appeared with its ambiguous position of object of knowledge and of subject that knows'.[31] The human being formed himself in the lacuna left by the classical discourse as dominated by language, life and work. He became accessible only through his words, body and work products, and thought of himself as a vehicle for pre-existing words, a living being and an instrument of production. Although at this early stage Foucault did not expound on what he meant by 'subject', it is evident that the entity he preferred to call 'human being' at this stage for him was a modern fabrication of Western knowledge, a position that he will elaborate further in his following works.

In *Surveiller et Punir* (1975) the concepts of subject and subjectivity are strictly linked to the concepts of body, power and to the relation power-knowledge, which need to be analysed in order to better place Foucault's reflections on subjectivity.

In his 1971 essay 'Nietzsche, la Généalogie, l'Histoire' Foucault briefly introduced his concept of body, describing it as: marked by past events; caught by regimes that shape it; poisoned by food, values, and moral laws;

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[29] 'sujet souverain de toute connaissance possible'. Foucault. *Les Mots et les Choses,* p. 321.

[30] The conception of language and representation of the classical *episteme* did not allow to problematise human existence. Language was 'transparent' and words 'colourless' (*Ibid.* p. 322), therefore they allowed to know things as they were, without interposing any barrier. Representations of things were in a continuum with things, therefore they revealed things as they really were.

[31] 'l'homme apparaît avec sa position ambiguë d'objet pour un savoir et de sujet qui connaît'. *Ibid.* p. 323. In the new *episteme* the discourse did not organise the empirical world any longer with its representations and the transparency between the order of things and their representations ceased to exist. New ways were needed to put in order and represent from the exterior things that were now opaque. It is in this historical moment that grammar, natural history and economy appeared to organise the empirical world through the organisation of languages, life and production/work in systems and taxonomies.

resistant.[32] In *Surveiller et Punir*, Foucault expounded what he defined the 'political body',[33] a body in the grips of relations of power and knowledge that: subject it, by making of it an object of knowledge; affect it directly, by marking it, tormenting it, imposing on it works or ceremonies, and particularly by utilising it as a useful force. In order to be a useful force the body must be productive and subjected. Subjection is not obtained only through violence and ideology: subjection can be physical and not violent at the same time; can be organised, calculated, subtle, without resorting to arms and terror and still be physical. Subjection can be obtained through the 'political technology of the body',[34] which is: a knowledge of the body that is not exactly biological; a mastery of the body's forces that is more than just overcoming these forces; used by many institutions or state apparatuses, although not located in any of them; sustained by a new vision of power and of the relation power-knowledge. Foucault's new vision of power has the following main points:

- Power is not something that can be acquired, kept or lost, but is exercised in unequal relations.
- Power is not exercised by dominants on the dominated in a top-down manner, but power relations are formed in the small social groups that constitute the base of society and from there they then affect all society. Power is not forced on those who do not have it, but it passes through them and relies on them, exactly like they rely on the grasp power has on them to fight it.
- Power is always accompanied by resistance, which is internal to power and can even be used by power. As Jana Sawicki pointed out, 'sometimes power enlists the resistant forces into its own service. One of the ways it does this is by labeling them, by establishing norms and defining differences.'[35] Being the counterpart of power in the network of power relations, resistance is not concentrated in a single locus/focus of refusal, but it is dispersed irregularly in many fleeting points of resistance present in social strata and

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[32] See Foucault. *Dits et Écrits I,* pp. 1011,1015.
[33] 'corps politique'. Michel Foucault. *Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la Prison.* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 37.
[34] 'la technologie politique du corps'. *Ibid.* p. 34.
[35] Jana Sawicki. 'Foucault and Feminism: Toward a Politics of Difference', *Hypatia*, 1:2, (Fall 1986), pp. 29.

individuals, just as the network of power relations affects all institutions without being localised in them. Although resistance can sometimes cause radical ruptures, it most frequently causes the fracture of social groups and individuals.

- Power must not be seen always in negative terms, because power produces subjects too, as it will be shown later.
- Power relations are 'strategies by which individuals try to guide, to determine others' conduct',[36] but they are not evil in themselves. They affect free subjects only, i.e. subjects who have a whole range of possibilities, actions, behaviours in front of them and can resist the attempt to guide them. When subjects are not free they are caught in force relations, in a state of domination, not in power relations.
- Power relations are intentional and not subjective, because power has always goals, albeit no individual chooses or sets them, making the strategy of power anonymous.

Foucault's new vision of the relation power-knowledge has the following main points:

- power entails knowledge and vice versa;
- a power relation always constitutes a field of knowledge, just like knowledge always constitutes power relations;
- it is the relation power-knowledge, which is conflictual and evolves constantly, that determines the subjects, the objects, the methods and the possible domains of knowledge.

Power, when exerted on the body of those who are punished, under constant surveillance, or controlled all their lives (prisoners, children, colonised people, mental patients, etc.), produces inside those bodies an interiority that Foucault calls 'soul', an incorporeal, though historical, reality born out of the procedures of punishment and surveillance, well distinct from the soul of Christian theology. Foucault's 'soul' does not pre-exist nor is separated from

[36] 'stratégies par lesquelles les individus essaient de conduire, de déterminer la conduite des autres.' Foucault. *Dits et Écrits II*, p. 1546. Foucault believed that societies without power relations as he defined them cannot exist, but that it is necessary to minimise domination.

the body like the soul of the humanist tradition: '[T]he soul, effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul, prison of the body'.[37]

Foucault's soul appears simultaneously as product and instrument of power, since power produces it by working on the body and the soul assists power in its dominance of the body. Foucault refers to the fact that what he calls soul has already been called subjectivity, personality, psyche, consciousness etc., and is the object of several scientific discourses. All these different names are 'specific ways of conceptualizing human interiority',[38] each of which appeared in a particular context and historic moment. In particular the humanist concept of subjectivity for Foucault arose in the 17th-18th centuries because it was instrumental for the new way to exert power and punish that emerged at that time and replaced the 'monarchical superpower', which was no longer suitable to the modern bourgeois European societies that were undergoing fundamental transformations.[39] The new strategy introduced more effective, less severe punishments distributed more regularly, embedded the power to punish more deeply in society, and induced the reform of criminal laws and judicial systems in most European countries. With the new strategy power methods acquired new characteristics: their level of control became very high, so that every detail of the body was minutely controlled in a subtly coercive way; their objects of control were bodily movements and forces, their organisation and effectiveness; their modality of control was uninterrupted through the whole transformation process, acting on time, space and movement.

These characteristics allow us to classify these methods as discipline, and, although discipline was not new in history, these methods were a discipline of a new kind. They were 'an art of the human body'[40] that aimed at determining not only what the body was required to do, but also how it was required to do it (technique, effectiveness, speed). These disciplinary methods

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[37] 'l'âme, prison du corps.' Foucault. *Surveiller et Punir,* p. 38.
[38] Margaret A. McLaren. *Feminism, Foucault, and Embodied Subjectivity.* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), p. 84.
[39] For the description of those transformations (demographic explosion, the growth of capitalism, change in delinquency patterns, intolerance towards popular illegal practices, etc.) see Foucault. *Surveiller et Punir,* pp. 90-106. The expression 'surpouvoir monarchique' is on p. 95.
[40] 'un art du corps humain'. *Ibid.* p. 162.

disassembled and reassembled the body in such a way that it increased the body's productive forces and subdued them at the same time, so that the more docile the body was, the more useful it was and vice versa. Discipline became a useful ally of the new strategy of power because 'discipline «fabricates» individuals; it is the technique specific to a power that has individuals at the same time as objects and instruments of its exercise.'[41]

The individuality fabricated by discipline had four features that were functional to the new power strategy: 1) it was cellular, in the sense that through the play of the spatial isolation of bodies discipline allowed simultaneously to characterise the individual as such, to put in order a multiplicity and to have absolute control on the isolated individual; 2) it was organic, in the sense that through the strict control of bodily activities/movements/gestures discipline penetrated the natural body and imposed on it its time, rhythm and economy of movement; 3) it was genetic, in the sense that through activities gradually growing in complexity with time discipline 'tends towards a subjection that is never completely accomplished';[42] 4) it was combinatory, in the sense that through the combination of bodily forces in the best possible way the maximum advantage and efficacy were derived.

Discipline was the ideal option for the new power strategy. It was discreet, omnipresent and by fabricating individualities it really embedded the power to punish deeply in society, using three simple instruments, such as surveillance, normalising sanction and examination, which suited perfectly the aim of the new strategy, as it shall be demonstrated.

The principle of surveillance is that of a sole central gaze that always sees everything without being seen. This principle was exemplified in the *Panopticon*, a circular prison planned by Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century, in which the presence of the tower in front of the inmates induces in them the consciousness of being potentially spied on at all times, although this is not verifiable. Therefore they behave as if they are continuously supervised even

[41] 'La discipline «fabrique» des individus; elle est la technique spécifique d'un pouvoir qui se donne les individus à la fois pour objets et pour instruments de son exercice.' *Ibid.* p. 200.
[42] 'tend vers un assujettissement qui n'a jamais fini de s'achever.' *Ibid.* p. 190.

when they are not, becoming the bearers of the power situation in which they are caught up. This machinery makes all violence superfluous, because subjection is not imposed through violence. The inmate, by knowing that he is potentially always under the overseer's gaze, interiorises the gaze and 'becomes the principle of his own subjection'[43] by allowing the constraints of power to play upon himself. Thanks to surveillance disciplinary power becomes: automatic and anonymous, because power functions without being anybody's possession or creation, generated by its own apparatus that distributes the individuals within the field of power; indiscreet, because it is always everywhere; discreet, because it works unnoticed.

Discipline has its specific way to punish. Discipline punishes 'all that is inadequate to the rule, [..] the indefinite domain of the non-conform';[44] the disciplinary sanction therefore does not aim at expiation or repression, but ultimately at normalising. The normalising power of discipline constraints subjects to homogeneity, but at the same time individualises those who escape homogeneity by classifying the nuances of their difference from the norm. This individualisation aims at making the 'abnormal' difference an identity that isolates and excludes the individual, who is permanently attached to this identity.

Surveillance and normalising sanction are combined in the examination, because examination is a gaze that normalises and a surveillance that classifies and punishes all at once. Examination 'manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected',[45] in the sense that examination, for the first time, made a describable, knowable object of the commoner,[46] who was subjected because he/she was permanently under the observation of power's gaze, the only

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[43] 'il devient le principe de son propre assujettissement'. *Ibid.* p. 236.
[44] 'tout ce qui est inadéquat à la règle, [..] le domaine indéfini du non-conforme.' *Ibid.* p. 210.
[45] 'manifeste l'assujettissement de ceux qui sont perçus comme des objets et l'objectivation de ceux qui sont assujettis.' *Ibid.* p. 217.
[46] I specify commoner because in societies before the 'explosion of discipline' examination concerned only those who were in a position of power, who had their lives immortalised for the benefit of future generations. Common people were not observed, nor described. The new disciplinary procedures extended observation and description to anyone with the purpose to gather knowledge, to control and to dominate. This happened at the end of the 18th century, when in hospitals and schools the occasional and quick observation of the sick/pupil became a regular, constant examination in order to gather medical/pedagogical knowledge.

visible element of power. A registration system was soon created to record the knowledge gathered through examination in order to identify, describe and individualise individuals, and evaluate differences among them. Through the aforesaid tools discipline performed an inversion of visibility that facilitated the exercise of power up to the lowest level. The little visibility of this anonymous power had as counterpart the ubiquitous visibility and individualisation of subjects. By becoming so generalised, discipline put knowledge and power in a relation of reciprocal support: thanks to subtler power relations new knowledge was acquired and thanks to new knowledge effects of power increased.

The three tools of discipline do not disappear in *Histoire de la Sexualité I: la Volonté de Savoir* (1976), in which Foucault explores how the discourse about sexuality, what he calls *scientia sexualis*, has invaded Western societies as never before from the 18th century onwards. At that time power relations established sexuality as an object of knowledge thanks to new techniques of knowledge suitable to this object: new techniques for the examination of conscience and confession,[47] and a newly born secular technology of sex, derived from the Christian one, but under the jurisdiction of the medical establishment and of the state. This secular technology had three branches: pedagogy, aimed at children's sexuality and derived from the Christian spiritual pedagogy; medicine, and psychiatry later, aimed at women's biological sexuality and which derived its hysteria treatments from the Christian treatment of the possessed; demography, aimed at birth control and derived from the Christian control over conjugal relationships through confession. All these branches made extensive use of examination, surveillance and normalising sanction, i.e. of disciplinary power.

18th century society tasked itself with producing 'true' discourses about sex (the *scientia sexualis*) that, sometimes naïvely, mostly deliberately, lied about sex. Such discourses fabricated frightening consequences for sexual

[47] The Council of Trent (1545-63) and the Catholic Reformation (second half 16th century) changed the practise of Christian confession. Confessors encouraged penitents to reveal, in a euphemised language, apart from actions, also thoughts, dreams, memories, fantasies related to sex and the flesh. This renewed practice became well defined only towards the end of the 18th century.

practices not motivated by reproduction, which were presented even as life threatening and confined to the realm of disease and abnormality by doctors and psychiatrists. During the 19th century this *scientia sexualis* became well distinguished from the biology of reproduction. The latter was motivated by the will to know typical of Western sciences; the former was driven by a will to hide the truth of sex for regulating sexuality so that it became 'economically useful and politically conservative',[48] i.e. so that it could guarantee the reproduction of manpower and population and perpetuate social relations. This *scientia sexualis* presented a mock-truth that masked its real purposes and the truth of sex. Sex was presented as the repository of the hidden truth about the individual and therefore the knowledge of sex was perceived as a key to the knowledge of the subject. This explains why the knowledge of the subject was slowly built using the science of sex, which had its own specific power strategy.

In the 18th century medicine examined, medicalised and categorised as 'abnormal' sexual practises that did not conform to the norm and had gone unstudied for centuries (e.g. infantile masturbation, sodomy). Although the apparent aim was to eradicate them, medicine used those sexual practices as supports to extend its power on the subjects studied, because for the first time those practices and the individuals who practised them were observed, given a name and classified. By so doing, power brought perversions and perverts into existence and isolated them in a world apart: the world of perverts. Power divided perverts, who were often associated with delinquents and the insane, into specific species and incorporated the 'aberrant' sexualities permanently to the individuals' bodies and identities. Those sexualities became the principle of intelligibility and the specificity of those individuals in what was an example of individualisation based on the individual's sexuality.

To extend its power on individuals by obliging them to tell the truth about their own secret sexual practices, medicine (and psychiatry and psychoanalysis from the 19th century) used especially confession, 'a ritual of

[48] 'économiquement utile et politiquement conservatrice'. Michel Foucault. *Histoire de la Sexualité I: La Volonté de Savoir.* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 51.

discourse'[49] that took place in a power relation, since the confessant was obliged to speak, and hence dominated, by the interlocutor who listened without speaking. This injunction to confess everything about oneself is one of the methods the West has employed in order to achieve 'the subjection of human beings; I mean their constitution as «subjects»'.[50]

Sexuality is therefore not something given naturally that power tries to dominate or a secret that knowledge tries to unveil. Sexuality is 'a historical device',[51] a network in which pleasures, bodies, discourses, knowledge, controls and resistance interact according to strategies of power and knowledge. Foucault explains that to analyse sexuality considering it a historical or political device does not mean to eliminate the body. On the contrary he wants to prove how 'some power mechanisms are articulated directly on the body',[52] on its functions, physiological processes, sensations, etc. He wants to write a history of bodies and not of sex, because, although many believe that sex is the "other" of power and the fulcrum around which sexuality is articulated, for him "sex" is 'a complex idea, historically formed within the device of sexuality'[53] and through the strategies of power, not as the "other" of power.

The idea of "sex" developed, together with the device of sexuality, as something more than and different from bodies and having its own laws. Sexuality was put in place by modern Western societies starting from the 18th century[54] to supplement the traditional system regulating marriage, kinship, name and wealth transmission that now provided insufficient support for the new economic processes and political structures. The traditional system aimed at perpetuating the existing relations and at keeping the law that regulated them as it was, while the new economy aimed at continuously extending its domain and its control over populations with the help of sexuality.

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[49] 'un rituel de discours'. *Ibid.* p. 82.
[50] 'l'assujettissement des hommes; je veux dire leur constitution comme «sujets»' *Ibid.* p. 81.
[51] 'un dispositif historique'. *Ibid.* p. 139. On p. 200 he defines sexuality also 'dispositif politique' ('political device').
[52] 'des dispositifs de pouvoir s'articulent directement sur le corps'. *Ibid.* p. 200.
[53] 'une idée complexe, historiquement formée à l'intérieur du dispositif de sexualité'. *Ibid.* p. 201.
[54] Note the coincidence with the 'birth' of the human being and the creation of the concept of subject.

The device of sexuality was created by and for the bourgeoisie to protect and defend its descendants, longevity and healthiness and through it the bourgeoisie created its own specifically bourgeois sexuality and body. Therefore sexuality helped the formation of the bourgeois subject (in the sense of an Aristotelian *hupokeimenon*) and of bourgeois class consciousness. Instead in the first half of the 19th century the lower classes still did not demonstrate any awareness of their bodies and their sexualities, given the conditions they lived in. The bourgeoisie, aware of the link between class consciousness and the body, for some time refused to recognise the proletariat's body and sexuality. Nevertheless it was obliged to recognise both by hazards, such as pandemics and venereal diseases, and economic troubles that required birth control. By then the bourgeoisie had put in place schools, public hygiene, sanitation, medicalisation, which were exploited as a strategy to make the proletariat's body and sexuality vehicles of its subjection to the bourgeoisie, and not means to acquire class consciousness. This explains why the proletariat for a long time rejected sexuality, which was used to create the proletarian subject (in the sense of subjected proletarian).

Sexuality and sex were used as an instrument of subjection for women too, in the sense of creating the female subject as subjected. Through a strategy Foucault called hysterization, in the 18th century the feminine body was analysed, characterised and discredited as: completely saturated by sexuality; having an intrinsic pathology, therefore needing the cares of medicine; having several productive roles (controlled production of citizens, production and care of children, production and preservation of a familial space). That was the time when the woman who did not perform her productive roles was classified as 'hysteric', as the negative of the mother.

Sexuality and sex have a great subjection potential in modern societies too, because power in modern societies is a 'bio-power' and because sexuality and sex can act on life on two levels: the level of the individual's body, which is under the surveillance of doctors, psychiatrists, sexologists, priests, etc., and the level of the population, which is subject to birth control campaigns. Foucault defines bio-power as the power that controls and modifies life mechanisms, that is in charge of human life and, because of this, can attain

the body too. Bio-power is essentially a normalising power that like discipline corrects, regulates, hierarchises and addresses life and the body, and sex serves well its needs as a means to discipline the individual's body and to regulate population. In other words in modern societies the ubiquitous sexuality is a power instrument because mechanisms of power are addressed to the body, to life and to whatever makes life prosper, to the species and to whatever makes it strong, dominant or controllable and usable.

The subject presented in the works examined above comes across essentially as subjected to others. At the beginning of the 1980's during his lectures at the Collège de France Foucault's attention shifted from a subject subdued to others to a subject actively engaged in his formation. In a 1981 conference Foucault admitted that in his studies of prisons, asylums and hospitals he had concentrated too much on the domination techniques (intended as techniques for the determination of others' behaviours) those institutions employed to form certain subjects. He ignored at that time the existence of other techniques, which he called techniques of the self and that became central in his future works, that interact with domination techniques in the formation of the subject in Western civilisation. These techniques affect the body, the soul, the behaviour, the thoughts, and are actively used by individuals in order to achieve transformation or modification of their selves, aiming at a certain state of purity, perfection, happiness. He announced then that he intended to concentrate on those techniques of the self in the following years.[55] The main products of this new interest were the second and third volume of *Histoire de la Sexualité*.

In *Histoire de la Sexualité II: L'Usage des Plaisirs* (1984) we move from a subject subjected to power to an ethical subject, which is an individual endowed with a moral conduct that leads him 'to a certain way of being, characteristic of the ethical subject'[56] and to a certain behaviour. It is by

[55] Conference reproduced in Foucault. *Dits et Écrits II*, pp. 987-97.
[56] 'à un certain mode d'être, caractéristique du sujet moral.' Michel Foucault. *Histoire de la Sexualité II: L'Usage des Plaisirs.* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p. 39. In this book the ethical subject is always a male subject, because, as Foucault explains, Greek morality and philosophy were elaborated by men for men; nevertheless feminists have interpreted this

establishing a relation with his self that the individual is formed as ethical subject of his own actions. This relation entails four aspects: 1) the individual defines the part of himself or the behaviours which are to be affected by morality; 2) decides how to recognise these moral principles (divine law, or natural law, or rational law, etc.); 3) decides what he can do to affect the parts and behaviours he had defined; 4) sets a certain way of being (pure, free, immortal, etc.) as his moral purpose.

To become an ethical subject the individual must go through subjectivation and utilise the techniques of the self, which are practices through which the human being 'starts to know himself, controls himself, tests himself, perfects himself, transforms himself'.[57] Although in all moralities the two elements of behaving according to rules and of being an ethical subject coexist, in some moralities the accent can be on the former and in others on the latter. In the first case the law of behaviour is central and with it, the authority that propagates the law, imposes its observance and punishes transgressors. In this kind of morality the ethical subject comes into being through his relation to the law, to which he must submit if he wants to avoid committing mistakes that will expose him to punishment. In the second case the rules of behaviour are less important than being an ethical subject. In this kind of morality, which was the one ancient Greeks adopted in the classical (500-323 B.C.) and Hellenistic period (323-146 B.C.), the ethical subject is formed through care of the self and *askēsis*. Care of the self cannot be reduced to the care of the body or of possessions, but it is essentially care of the soul as activity, not as essence, and to take care of the self means to examine one's soul and to have some obligations towards one's soul, such as introspection, reading, recounting oneself through notes or letters about one's experiences, studies, etc.

To be an ethical subject the individual has to establish with his self and with others a relationship based on mastery and temperance. Mastery over

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differently, as we shall see in the following section. Foucault intends ethical as the Greeks intended it: *ethos* is 'un mode d'être du sujet et une certaine manière de faire, visible pour les autres.' Foucault. *Dits et Écrits II*, p. 1533.

[57] 'entreprend de se connaître, se contrôle, s'éprouve, se perfectionne, se transforme.' Foucault. *Histoire de la Sexualité II,* p. 40.

oneself (*enkrateia*), one's passions and desires is reached through *askēsis*, a practical training of the body and of the soul. Temperance for the Greeks was characterised by the subject freely choosing and following principles of action that conformed to reason and a behaviour that was the right middle between excess and insensibility in every activity: eating, drinking, copulation, sleep, exercise of authority in the household and in the *polis*. Temperance and virtue in general presupposed knowledge of what the *logos* prescribed. The individual could not become an ethical subject without firstly becoming a subject of knowledge of the *logos*, this reason-truth that entailed principles of conduct that were truths and prescriptions at the same time.

The *logos* would become an integral part of the temperate subject and its principles would in any occasion regulate his behaviour and his appetites without the subject doing anything. The virtuous and temperate subject for the Greeks was not the one who did not desire anything or who rejected pleasure, but the one who practiced pleasures wisely and mastered his desires and himself, establishing with his self a relation of dominance-obeisance. Mastery over oneself and temperance in the practice of pleasures were considered a kind of power over oneself and a form of freedom, as opposed to intemperance, intended as passivity in front of desires, which was deemed a form of slavery and the utmost moral negativity. Temperance was required of those who were in charge of other people, because they were deemed able to exert power over others only when they had full power over themselves. Intemperate men could not handle the power entrusted to them, since they would abuse it to satisfy their own desires, damaging themselves and the community.

In such a context there was no unique universal moral code to which every subject was subjected, but rather a *savoir faire*, which took into account general guiding principles, that allowed each subject to adjust his actions to his personal circumstances, needs, status, etc. By so doing he became an ethical subject, in the sense of attached to his own identity rather than subdued to the other/power, master of himself rather than servant of the law, who established a power relation with his self thanks to the knowledge of his self he derived from the techniques of the self. The Greeks used these

techniques to form the ethical temperate subject who, by using pleasures in a moderate and measured way, made his existence aesthetically remarkable and admirable, harmonious and beautiful. Those techniques were not used to decipher and eliminate desires hidden in the soul of a 'desiring subject', since desires were not intrinsically negative and the Greeks were not desiring subjects.[58]

In *Histoire de la Sexualité III: Le Souci de Soi* (1984) Foucault shows how ethical subjectivation and the 'elements that constitute ethical subjectivity'[59] have been modified by the development of 'the culture of the self' (*culture de soi*) in the first two centuries A.D.,[60] period in which this culture reached its climax. I will first look at the main features and influences on the subject of the culture of the self to then move on to its triggers.

The culture of the self was a development of the care of the self, an imperative already known in the classical period to Socrates and Xenophon, which for the subsequent Greek philosophers became the focus of philosophy as art of living. The care of the self developed into a true culture of the self when it became widespread among several philosophic schools, generated practices, ways of life, etc. that intensified and valued the relationship with the self, i.e. the establishment of oneself 'as object of knowledge and domain of action'[61] in order to transform and correct oneself. In many ways the care of the self was a social activity, since it implied discussions with others and the subject taking care of himself had the right to ask for the guidance of a teacher, friend, spiritual guide who had the duty to help him. The help could be reciprocal, so that the subject taking care of his self was at the same time

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[58] Foucault contested the customariness of the concept of desiring subject and did its genealogy in *L'Usage des Plaisirs*. For him the Greeks were not desiring subjects because: they did not conceive desire as lack, because in the *aphrodisia* (acts and practices that we now call sexual) act, pleasure and desire were strictly connected in a circular way, with the performance of the act causing pleasure, pleasure provoking desire, desire inducing to repeat the pleasurable act and so forth; for them desire was not more important than pleasure and act, was not a key issue in their lives.

[59] 'éléments constitutifs de la subjectivité morale'. Michel Foucault. *Histoire de la Sexualité III: Le Souci de Soi*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p. 93.

[60] Foucault calls this period imperial and compares Greek and Latin texts of this period with Greek texts of the classical and Hellenistic period to show the shift in emphasis. Also for the text of the imperial period is valid what mentioned in footnote 56.

[61] 'pour objet de connaissance et domaine d'action'. Foucault. *Histoire de la Sexualité III*, p. 59.

allowing someone else's care of his own self, which made of the care of the self 'an intensification of social relations'[62] and not a solitary withdrawal from the world.

The culture of the self made the issue of truth (about what one is, does and can do) and the knowledge of the self so important in the ethical subjectivation that specific techniques of the self were recommended by philosophers such as Seneca the Younger (circa 4 B.C.–65 A.D.) and Plutarch (circa 46-127 A.D.):

- Exercises in abstinence through which the subject acquired independence from non-indispensable things.
- Examinations of conscience done in the morning to recall the tasks the subject had to accomplish during the day or done at night to recall what the subject had done and failed to do during the day. The recollection of mistakes and failures aimed at continuously reminding the subject of the truth about what he did and could have done during the day and of the rules of conduct he had forgotten, and not at stimulating guilt and remorse.
- All ideas had to be checked in order to accept only the ones that were born within the subject and were under his power.

The purpose of these techniques of the self was the 'conversion to the self', which meant to perform all activities bearing in mind that the final goal of all activities was within the subject, to leave behind distracting worries about the future and the world, to escape all forms of dependence and enslavement, so that the subject could finally reach and access his self. The subject formed through these technologies was still master of himself as in the classical and Hellenistic periods, although the emphasis shifted from mastery to a sort of juridical possession of the self: the subject belonged to himself only and had over himself a complete authority that nobody could defy. In this sense abstinence from all unnecessary things and refusal of external ideas were ways to free the subject from their grip on him and to increase his authority over himself.

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[62] 'une intensification des relations sociales'. *Ibid.* p. 74. On p. 72 there is a similar statement: 'On touche là à l'un des points les plus importants de cette activité consacrée à soi-même: elle constitue, non pas un exercice de la solitude, mais une véritable pratique sociale.'

The care of the self in the imperial period had two new features: a special kind of pleasure and a strong emphasis on illness. The subject that accessed his self drew from it a pleasure that was a completely untroubled state of permanent bliss originating within the self, in which the subject was satisfied with what he was and appreciated himself. This kind of pleasure was opposed to voluptuousness, which was a fleeting pleasure originating outside the self in ephemeral objects. In the care of the self there was a combination of care of the body and care of the soul, which required cooperation between philosophy and medicine, because the illnesses of the soul could affect the body and vice versa. Medicine acquired in the imperial period a greater role than before and focused its attention on the illness and weakness of the body, which threatened also the soul, rather than on the athletic training of young men's bodies, probably because the texts about the care of the self were now addressed to middle-aged men.

Medicine pushed individuals to recognise themselves as ill. The subject had to admit to be feeble, ill or prone to diseases of the body and of the soul, to be in need of correction or therapy, with the illnesses of the soul being much more difficult to diagnose than the physical ones. The subject of the imperial period was still a master/possessor of himself, but a frail one compared to the subject of the previous periods, and was not strong enough to adapt the aesthetic and ethical guidelines of the art of living to his personal circumstances, needs, status, etc. For this reason the art of living became more expressed in universal natural or logical principles to which everybody was subjected regardless of personal circumstances, needs, status, etc., although it was not the set of prohibitions and a strictly defined moral code it would become later.

As regards the origin of the culture of the self, Foucault believed that the culture of the self was a new stylistics of life elaborated in response to two social phenomena: the evolution of marriage and of the married heterosexual couple; the reshuffling of political roles in Roman Greece (146 B.C. – 330 A.D.). In the new couple[63] the husband was still in a statutory superior

[63] In the imperial period the marriage institution became based on a universal impulse towards companionship and procreation, less used to form strategic alliances and with more freedom

position, but at the same time the affection towards his wife could make him dependent on or even subjected to her, as some surviving documents of the Imperial period show. Within such a couple the husband formed himself as an ethical subject not only through mastery over himself and over others, but also through a reciprocal relationship with others and with his wife in particular. In the new couple the wife was the other *par excellence* of her husband: 'the consort, as privileged partner, must be treated as a being identical to oneself and as an element with which a substantial unity is formed.'[64] The mastery over oneself was now manifested particularly in the respect towards the wife, whose valorisation increased alongside the care of the self.

The new, more complex political roles Greek aristocracy played in the Roman period[65] made it more problematical for the aristocratic individual to recognise himself as subject of his actions, caught as he was between what he was, what he could do, his obligations and his privileges. In such a context the individual could either ostentatiously display all symbols of his status and power over others, or establish with himself a relationship that was independent from his status and that was accomplished in his sovereignty over himself. The individual who opted for the second alternative was the one who turned to the care of the self and philosophy hoping to find an ethics that allowed him to be formed as ethical subject in relation to social and political activities. He had to give those activities up if they prevented the care of his self, because the individual was not what he was thanks to his political post, but thanks to a divine principle present in all human beings: human reason.

The subject of the imperial period underwent a crisis of subjectivation, in the sense that the individual found it difficult 'to form himself as ethical subject of his conduct'[66], because his previous relation of superiority to himself, to his

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of choice of the spouse. Consequently the personal relationship between the spouses became paramount and the affection linking them gave the wife some equality within the couple.

[64] 'le conjoint, en tant que partenaire privilégié, doit être traité comme un être identique à soi et comme un élément avec lequel on forme une unité substantielle.' Foucault. *Histoire de la Sexualité III*, p. 219.

[65] Greek aristocracy became the administrative arm of the Romans, taking therefore a new role: no longer masters of the polis, they were caught between the superior power of the emperor, whose orders they needed to pass on, and the people they administered, whom they had to convince or oblige to obey orders.

[66] 'se constituer comme sujet moral de ses conduites'. Foucault. *Histoire de la Sexualité III*, p. 131.

wife and to others, was put under discussion. In such a situation the subject found that the culture of the self gave his existence a purpose and rules he could subject himself to.

Although in the last two volumes of the *Histoire de la Sexualité* the subject actively forms himself through the techniques of the self, this does not mean that Foucault's subject has become the *subjectum* of modern philosophers. In a 1984 interview Foucault very explicitly stated that the subject 'is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not above all and always identical to itself'.[67] He explained that when the subject exercises his political rights he takes a form and establishes a relation to himself that are different from the form and the relation he has when he is engaged in a sexual relationship. The two forms will be related to each other, but we are not in front of the same kind of subject. Moreover for him the subject is not completely autonomous in his self-formation, because the techniques of the self the subject uses are not invented by him, but he finds them in his culture, which can recommend or impose them on him. In an interview published shortly before his death he manifested his scepticism and hostility towards the concept of a sovereign subject, because subjectivation is obtained either through subjection or through techniques of the self, which are practices of freedom, but not disjointed from their cultural background.[68]

Foucault also expressed his opinion about subjectivity and identity in an Islamic context in articles and interviews in occasion of his visits to Iran as a correspondent for the *Corriere della Sera*, covering the events that led to the instauration of the Islamic republic in 1978-9. In one of his articles he referred to Islam as a source of identity. For destitute Iranians the only way 'to find what one is',[69] to find protection, is to rediscover Islam. In an interview he stated that for all Iranians demonstrating in the streets 'religion was like the

[67] 'Ce n'est pas une substance. C'est une forme, et cette forme n'est pas surtout ni toujours identique à elle-même.' Foucault. *Dits et Écrits II,* p. 1537.
[68] In this interview, published in May 1984, he stated: 'je pense effectivement qu'il n'y a pas un sujet souverain, fondateur, une forme universelle de sujet qu'on pourrait retrouver partout. Je suis très sceptique et très hostile envers cette conception du sujet.' *Ibid.* p. 1552.
[69] 'retrouver ce qu'on est'. *Ibid.* p. 685.

promise and the guarantee of finding anything to radically change their subjectivity.'[70] He saw in the revolution the Iranian people's will to renew their subjectivity through Shiite Islam's spiritual contribution, whose revolutionary potential he admired, albeit he overlooked the brutal repression Khomeini's regime perpetrated against Iranian women and homosexuals among others.[71]

2) Feminist appraisals of the Foucauldian subject

Many feminists discipline Foucault for ignoring sexual difference in most of his writings.[72] The references to the hysterization of women in *La Volonté de Savoir* and to the wife's role in the renewed couple in *Le Souci de Soi* are rare exceptions. Nevertheless several theorists have approached Foucault for feminist goals and I shall now look at some feminist critiques and reinterpretations only of the Foucauldian concepts and theories employed in this thesis.

Lois McNay finds Foucault's concept of 'political body'[73] useful in the feminist discourse, because it preserves the body's materiality without transforming it into a biological essence, something that some feminist tendencies have been unable to do.[74] Caroline Ramazanoğlu too underlines how 'biological essentialism [...] has proved a persistent problem for the potential coherence of feminist thought'.[75]

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[70] 'la religion était pour eux comme la promesse et la garantie de trouver de quoi changer radicalement leur subjectivité.' Claire Brière and Pierre Blanchet. *Iran: la Révolution au Nom de Dieu (Suivi d'un Entretien avec Michel Foucault).* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1979), p. 234.

[71] Foucault enthusiastically supported the Iranian revolution, whose pitfalls he overlooked. His articles generated a fiery debate among French and Iranian intellectuals and the public; see Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson. *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[72] Among these are Lois McNay, Sandra Lee Bartky, Patricia O'Brien, Caroline Ramazanoğlu.

[73] See above p.17.

[74] Lois McNay. *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self.* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 17.

[75] Ramazanoğlu defines biological essentialism as 'the idea that there is an essential femaleness or essential maleness in our physical being that might help explain social differences between women and men'. Caroline Ramazanoğlu. 'Introduction', in Caroline Ramazanoğlu (ed.). *Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions Between Foucault and Feminism.* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 6.

Kate Soper[76] on the contrary disagrees with post-structural feminists inspired by Foucauldian thought, such as Judith Butler and Susan Bordo, who, following Foucault's anti-essentialism, consider the physical body as fully constructed. Referring in particular to Bordo's statement that 'there is no 'natural' body. [..] Our bodies, no less than anything else that is human are constituted by culture',[77] Soper observes that the biological body pre-exists any cultural work, an observation with which I concur. Nevertheless I do not believe that the idea of a totally constructed physical body can be attributed to Foucault as Soper does. It is rather a personal elaboration of post-structural feminists with which I disagree and that will not be applied in this thesis, because it pushes the discursiveness of the body to extremes. Butler explicitly states that for Foucault 'the materiality of the body [..] is produced by and in direct relation to the investment of power. [..] the body [..] is not an independent materiality, [..] which a subsequent investment comes to mark, signify upon, or pervade; the body is that for which materialization and investiture are coextensive.'[78] Such elaboration goes well beyond Foucault's definition of political body and is contradicted by several of his statements indicating that power acts on a pre-existing body, such as 'the human body enters a power machinery that explores it meticulously, disarticulates it and recomposes it'.[79]

Despite the usefulness of Foucault's concept of 'political body', it has been criticised by Lois McNay and Sandra Bartky. McNay finds that by excessively emphasising the body as object of domination techniques Foucault gave the idea of a subject completely subdued to and entirely fabricated by power and ignored other elements, such as gender, that

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[76] Kate Soper. 'Productive contradictions', in Ramazanoğlu (ed.). *Op. cit.,* pp. 29-50.
[77] Susan Bordo. 'Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology and the Crystallization of Culture', in Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (eds.). *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance.* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), p. 90.
[78] Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection.* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 91.
[79] The terminology Butler uses suggests that she founds her elaboration on the definition of political body that can be found in Foucault. *Surveiller et Punir*, p. 34, in which nevertheless there is no mention of power producing the materiality of the body; I have referred to the same definition on p. 17 above. 'Le corps humain entre dans une machinerie de pouvoir qui le fouille, le désarticule et le recompose.' *Ibid.* p. 162.

contribute to subjectivation, which is something Foucault himself had admitted.[80]

While inspired by Foucault's anti-essentialism in forming her idea that there is no essential femininity, Bartky finds the concept of 'political body' limited because it ignores gender. For Bartky this limitation prevented Foucault from locating disciplinary techniques that aim specifically at moulding women's bodies into bodies that are feminine, according to a historically specific conception of femininity, and docile for the benefit of men. Bartky's discipline of the feminine body is not institutionalised, which makes it harder to recognise it as such and gives the impression that this discipline is self-imposed, that femininity is something women naturally embrace and not a technique to fabricate female/feminine subjects.[81]

I would argue that by insisting too much on gender Bartky runs the risk to operate an individualisation, i.e. to accentuate women's gender as what makes them individuals, to make of gender the principle of intelligibility and the specificity of women. De Beauvoir instead already in the 1940's tried to strike a balance between various elements, such as class, ethnicity, nationality, etc., that are components of subjectivity like sex.[82] In the 1980's the interconnection among those elements has been developed by African-American feminists, such as Audre Lorde and bell hooks, who saw black women's experiences shaped by the interaction of race, gender, social class and sexuality, which Kimberle Crenshaw described with the concept of intersectionality in 1989.[83]

McLaren finds the idea that soul/subjectivity is not separated from the body[84] as offering 'an account of embodied subjectivity', which she finds compatible with the feminist idea that 'subjectivity is always embodied'[85] and with the feminist rejection of the dichotomy body/soul. Moreover she disagrees with the feminists that see the Foucauldian body only as passively marked by

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[80] See above p. 26.
[81] Sandra Bartky. 'Foucault, Femininity and the Modernisation of Patriarchal Power', in Diamond and Quinby (eds.). *Op. cit.*
[82] See next section.
[83] Kimberle Crenshaw. 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: a Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', *1989 University of Chicago Legal Forum,* (1989), pp. 139-67. Other works about intersectionality, which is not considered in this thesis, are listed in the bibliography.
[84] See above pp. 18-9.
[85] McLaren. *Op. cit.,* p. 84, 82.

power, because for McLaren this is only one of the aspects of the Foucauldian body. In fact even in *Surveiller et Punir* the body is not completely passive under the action of power, but rather interacts with it. The body is resistant, responds to discipline by learning new skills and increasing its own forces and contributes to its own subjection by internalising the overseer's gaze.[86]

As regards Foucault's concept of sexuality, M. E. Bailey finds that it can be challenging for feminists, because it shows that sexuality is not an essence, but a historical and political device that served not only the interest of masculinist power, but also of the bourgeoisie, of capitalism and of medical sciences that presented it as an essence, which should induce essentialist feminists to re-examine their position. She warns against the dangers of wanting to establish an essential female sexual identity, which is a need generated in women by contemporary western power relations. Although she recognises that identities 'ground existence, and thus enable action'[87] she also considers an essential female sexual identity a limit to women's possibilities and a potential source of conflict among women who do not recognise themselves in that identity.

Jana Sawicki sees in sexuality as conceived by Foucault 'an arena of struggle' that is 'neither outside power nor wholly circumscribed by it'. In her opinion sexual practices can repress or liberate, can be used to resist or can be co-opted by power according to their socio-historical context.[88] Foucault himself remarked that, although sexuality has been previously used as a subjection apparatus to pin women down to their sex, feminism has been able to appropriate it for its own emancipatory purposes.[89] However he considered sexual liberation struggles limited because by demanding the right to a specific sexuality that had been constructed within the repressive apparatus of sexuality, they accepted to be permanently tied to this ready-made sexuality that became their fixed sexual identity, while human beings can create their

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[86] *Ibid.* pp.106-9. For the interaction body-power and body's resistance see above pp. 17-21.
[87] M. E. Bailey. 'Foucauldian Feminism: Contesting Bodies, Sexuality and Identity', in Ramazanoğlu (ed.). *Op. cit.*, pp. 99-122; quote on p. 111.
[88] Sawicki, Jana. *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power, and the Body.* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 33-48. The quotes are on p. 43.
[89] Foucault. *Dits et Écrits II,* p. 261.

own sexuality freely.[90] As a consequence Sawicki too is wary of basing feminist theory and politics on an essential female sexual identity, which excludes women with different sexual preferences.

As regards Foucault's concepts of power and resistance, Ramazanoğlu believes that the idea that power is 'everywhere and, at some level,... available to all'[91] could divert the attention from specific forms of domination, such as men's domination over women, that she, together with Janet Holland, defined temporally and geographically ubiquitous.[92] At the same time she recognises that his deconstruction of power allows feminists to perceive forms of power that go beyond universal patriarchy, such as the power of some women on other women who belong to a different class, ethnicity, have a different religious and sexual orientation, etc.[93] Nevertheless the fact that Foucault ignored class, ethnicity, nationality, etc. did not allow him to see the institutionalised power relations involved in their interactions.

On this last sentence I have to comment that it is partially imprecise: in 'Nietzsche, la Généalogie, l'Histoire' Foucault described descent as the object of genealogy and explains descent as belonging to a group of people sharing the same blood, or tradition or the same high or low social position, and he refers also to race and social type.[94] In *La Volonté de Savoir* he also referred to the link between sexuality and class consciousness.[95] Therefore class and ethnicity were not ignored, although they were not prominent.

For McLaren Foucault's idea that power is omnipresent recalls the position of the early Women's Liberation movement, which claimed that power was present also in those areas of life that were deemed private and personal, as reflected in its motto "personal is political".[96]

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[90] 'La sexualité est quelque chose que nous créons nous-même [..] elle fait parti de la liberté dont nous jouissons dans ce monde.' *Ibid.* p. 1554. 1982 interview.
[91] Ramazanoğlu. *Op. cit.,* p. 10.
[92] Caroline Ramazanoğlu and Janet Holland. 'Women's Sexuality and Men's appropriation of desire', in *Ibid.* pp. 239-64.
[93] Amireh and Majaj provide an account of how the relations between Third and First World women authors often mirror the unequal power relations between the worlds to which these women belong, even within a feminist context. See Amireh and Majaj (eds.). *Op. cit.,* pp. 6-14.
[94] Foucault. *Dits et Écrits I,* p. 1008.
[95] See above p. 25.
[96] McLaren. *Op. cit.,* p. 65.

Soper charges Foucault of ignoring the specific forms in which power is exerted in societies with a sexual hierarchy and the different effects of disciplining power on women and men, which is due to his 'androcentric bias'.[97]

Susan Bordo[98] refers to the idea of the interiorised gaze entailed by disciplinary surveillance[99] to explain that women are not only and always victims of power. Women also cooperate in maintaining their own subordination because they have interiorised the image of femininity prevalent in their culture and keep normalising themselves to that image by aesthetic, dietary and fitness practices and by their behaviours. Nevertheless this is not an inevitable situation, because, if power cannot be owned and resistance is where power is, women can exert power too, although men have historically had more chances than women to exert it, and women can resist the normalising pressure of femininity images and refuse to conform to those images. Bordo cautiously maintains that resistance is possible for women, but it is not free, it must be conquered and sometimes dearly paid for, which is very close to de Beauvoir's position presented in the subsequent section.

Caroline Ramazanoğlu and Janet Holland rightly point out that apart from distinguishing between power, as what can be resisted, and force, as what cannot be resisted, Foucault said very little about force and force relations and how to face them. Moreover 'his claim... that power comes as a package with the possibility of resistance is not then grounded in experience, nor an inference from history; it is a condition of the way he conceptualises power.'[100] The two authors reprimand Foucault for postulating resistance as existing without theorising its origins and its effects and without considering experience and history. Therefore his conceptions of power and resistance are of little help when considering the many real situations in which women find themselves deprived of resistance by men's violence, because they do not empower women.

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[97] Soper. *Op. cit.*, p. 39.
[98] Susan Bordo. 'Feminism, Foucault and the Politics of the Body', in Ramazanoğlu (ed.). *Op. cit.*, pp.179-202.
[99] See above pp. 20-1.
[100] Caroline Ramazanoğlu and Janet Holland. *Op. cit.*, p. 257.

On this I would argue that Foucault himself must have acquired a wide-ranging experience of resistance through his personal political commitment. Although his conceptions might be of little help for women in the grip of masculinist violence, and indeed any violence, they could be useful for all the other women who face daily the more or less subliminal forms of a power that is not always masculinist.

Coming to the techniques of the self, Jean Grimshaw[101] makes an interesting point about them: these practices, which in fact involve much self-monitoring and self-discipline, are characterised as practices of power of the self over the self, through which the subject forms her/himself in relative autonomy. In *Surveiller et Punir* the subject was formed through internalised disciplinary techniques that made external surveillance redundant; these techniques were seen as depriving the subject of all autonomy and subjecting him completely. Grimshaw observes that Foucault did not explain why practices that firstly were seen as coercive and subjecting became later constitutive of autonomy, and, more importantly he left a crucial question unanswered:

> *when* forms of self-discipline or self-surveillance can with any justification be seen as exercises of autonomy or self-creation, or when they should be seen, rather, as forms of discipline to which the self is subjected, and by which autonomy is constrained.[102]

Grimshaw takes as an example of contemporary self-surveillance the fitness and beauty regimens and fashions women follow, referring to Bartky's idea that they seem self-imposed[103] and wonders when such practices are to be seen as autonomous self-mastery or as subjection to internalised aesthetic norms that undermine autonomy. In my opinion Grimshaw overlooks an important difference between disciplinary techniques and practices of the self. The disciplinary techniques described in *Surveiller et Punir* were used on inmates, hospital patients, soldiers, etc., who believed that they were constantly observed and that undisciplined acts were seen and punished

[101] Jean Grimshaw. 'Practices of freedom' in Caroline Ramazanoğlu (ed.). *Op. cit.*, pp. 51-72.
[102] *Ibid.* p. 66.
[103] See above p. 36.

accordingly. The techniques of the self instead were adopted and managed autonomously by Greek philosophers and aristocrats, who were not subjected to anyone else's scrutiny.[104] Similarly, beauty regimens and fashions can undermine autonomy if women follow them for fear of being judged by others, as it will mostly be the case in the short stories I analyse, while they could be considered as autonomous self-mastery if women use them for their own pleasure and to improve themselves and their quality of life.

Remaining in the field of techniques of the self and discipline, Helen O'Grady[105] investigates how self-discipline affects women particularly and how women can benefit from the techniques of the self. O'Grady presents self-policing as insidious and debilitating for everyone for two reasons: being considered an automatic form of relationship with the self and indispensable in maintaining identity, it goes unnoticed; it induces the subject to internalise continuous surveillance and with it the duty to conform to set norms. Nonetheless she maintains that women's experiences of self-policing tend to be particularly harsh, because historically women have had a subordinate status, have been trained predominantly to care for others rather than for themselves, consider their needs secondary to those of others, possess little self-esteem and much self-doubt. All these elements induce women to establish with their selves a strictly controlling relation, so that they can severely monitor their behaviour, words, feelings, etc. and adapt them to norms or others' expectations, suffocating spontaneity and self-fashioning.

Failures to adapt can be interpreted as transgressions against the self and can generate forms of self-punishment, such as a paralysing belittling self-criticism that precludes any change, and negative comparisons with others that are perceived as normalised. These comparisons induce women who are not normalised to feel inadequate and to isolate themselves from others, which is individualisation produced by the normalising power of discipline. Women who are not normalised because they are not white, heterosexual, able-

[104] For McLaren the techniques of the self and the disciplinary techniques of the earlier works are both disciplinary practices, but the former existed in a world that ignored normalisation, while the latter were normalising techniques. See McLaren. *Op. cit.*, p. 68.

[105] Helen O'Grady. 'An Ethics of the Self', in Dianna Taylor and Karen Vintges (eds.), *Feminism and the Final Foucault.* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), pp. 91-117.

bodied, middle class, etc. must deal not only with the internalised continuous surveillance they exert on themselves, but also with the discrimination normalised women operate and with the negative features they attribute to the non-normalised, who sometimes internalise those features.

O'Grady considers two of Foucault's ideas (the individual is formed as ethical subject of his own actions by establishing a relation with his self; the care of the self is a prerequisite for the care of others) as ways to counter the negative effects of women's self-policing. By caring more for their selves women could know them better and transform them creatively, with a more detached attitude towards given female identities and their norms. O'Grady though, echoing McNay and bell hooks, criticizes the kind of relationship the Foucauldian ethical subject establishes with his self, which is mastery, dominance, battle, hence too similar to the kind of relation women establish with their selves when they discipline themselves; instead it could be a loving and friendly relationship, so that the female subject ceases to be the merciless overseer of her self to become the kind carer that allows the self to flourish and change, accepts failures and appreciates the self.

Coming to Foucault's conception of the self and of the subject, I have noticed that feminist critics of Foucault tend to react to it in two different ways: they either consider it individualistic or they criticise it because it rejects the idea of a universal, unified, rational, free subject. In the first field Soper dismisses Foucault's subject as 'individualistic, even solipsistic' relying 'on a valorisation of ourselves as sexual monads accountable only to the dictates of our personal tastes and dispositions, and hence [abstracting] entirely from questions of inter-personal dependency and need'.[106] Lois McNay points out that Foucault's 'theory of the self prioritizes an isolated individuality, rather than demonstrating how the construction of the self is inextricably bound up in various processes of social interaction';[107] Jane Flax too speaks of Foucault's

[106] Soper. *Op. cit.*, p. 38. [abstracting] repaces 'to abstract' to suit the syntax of my sentence.
[107] McNay. *Op. cit.*, p. 165.

self as a monad engaged in a 'highly individualistic and atomistic quest for the beautiful life'.[108]

These critiques overlook *Le Souci de Soi*, in which Foucault described the care of the self as a social practice, he explained the importance of political activity in the subjectivation process and described the subjectivation of the husband as happening also through a reciprocal relationship with others and with his wife in particular.[109] Foucault's ethical subject is hence relational, although she/he is relatively autonomous[110] in the choice of the principles that guide her/his ethical practice of freedom,[111] but not an individualist obsessed by the cult of the self, permanently withdrawn from public life and isolated from others.

In the second field various strands of feminism (liberal, Marxist, radical, socialist) reject Foucault's conception of the subject because, as Moya Lloyd indicated, they feel their politics threatened by any philosophical position that dismantles the unified subject,[112] which they consider indispensable for agency. Essentialist feminists[113] do not want to renounce their category of essentialist female identity unifying all women and needing liberation, despite the fact that this category has failed to establish elements that unite all women and has been criticised by many feminists, among which African-American and postcolonial, since the 1980's.[114]

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[108] Jane Flax. 'Beyond Equality: Gender, Justice and Difference' in Gisela Bock and Susan James (eds.). *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 202.

[109] See: above pp. 30-2; Foucault. *Histoire de la Sexualité III*, pp. 72-5, 112-31, 218-9. Taylor, Vintges and McWhorter instead share my opinion. See Dianna Taylor and Karen Vintges. 'Introduction: Engaging the Present' in Taylor and Vintges (eds.). *Op. cit.,* pp. 1-11; Ladelle McWhorter. *Bodies and Pleasures: Foucault and the Politics of Sexual Normalization.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 194-9.

[110] Also McNay recognises the autonomy of the ethical subject, but she sees in it a tendency towards subjectivism and individualism.

[111] Foucault strictly linked freedom and ethics by describing freedom as 'la condition ontologique de l'éthique' and ethics as 'la pratique réfléchie de la liberté'. Foucault. *Dits et Écrits II,* pp. 1530-1.

[112] Moya Lloyd. 'A Feminist Mapping of Foucauldian politics' in Susan Hekman (ed.). *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault.* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), pp. 241-64.

[113] Such as Judy Grahn, Kay Turner and Kathleen Barry; mothering theorists, such as Nancy Chodorow and Carole Gilligan, share the same view.

[114] Collins gives a quick overview of the African-American, Latino, Native American and Asian-American women intellectuals who have criticised U.S. white theorists, among whom Chodorow and Gilligan, who 'promoted the notion of a generic woman who is White and

As seen, Foucault's subject is not deprived of agency, despite being non-unified and enmeshed in power relations, because he/she has the option to resist and some autonomy, but in the Foucauldian paradigm there is no subject's substance and no universal female identity to rediscover and set free, hence we cannot speak of women's liberation.[115] Nevertheless this paradigm leaves space for creation, in which women can invent their selves and their lives as works of art that are not completely subdued to normalising regimes, and affirms 'the principle of a critique and of a permanent creation of ourselves in our autonomy'.[116] It translates in the possibility for every woman to stop identifying herself with universals, such as essentialist female identity or the rational Enlightenment subject, which are forms of normalisation for women, and create subjectivities that are 'developmental becoming'.[117]

Susan Hekman rightly observed that, due to multiplicity of situations and oppressions women face, '[a] unitary conception of "woman", an autonomous, constituting subject, a politics of identity and liberation fail to meet the needs of feminism in the late twentieth century. Foucault's work offers a means of transforming these concepts and defining a feminism that is transformative as well.'[118] Nevertheless Foucault does not aim at abandoning 'the self to flux, dissipation and fragmentation' as Baudrillard suggests.[119] In 'Le Sujet et le Pouvoir'[120] Foucault encourages to reject the prescriptive subjectivities and individualities imposed by institutions in order to explore and create new forms of coherent subjectivities, that are constructed and therefore arbitrary, but necessary to found political action and avoid falling into nihilism.

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middle class' in Patricia Hill Collins. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment.* (New York, London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 4-8.

[115] In a 1984 interview Foucault explained his hesitation in using the word liberation as linked with a pre-existing nature; see Foucault. *Dits et Écrits II,* pp. 1528-9.

[116] 'le principe d'une critique et d'une création permanente de nous-mêmes dans notre autonomie'. *Ibid.* p. 1392 (1984 essay *Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?*).

[117] I borrowed this expression from p. 156 of Ladelle McWhorter's essay 'Practising Practising' in Dianna Taylor and Karen Vintges (eds.). *Op. cit.,* pp. 143-62.

[118] Susan Hekman. 'Editor's Introduction' in Susan Hekman (ed.). *Op. cit.,* p. 11. Margaret McLaren too sees the Foucauldian subject as potentially enriching 'the relational feminist subject' and finds many points in common between the two. See McLaren. *Op. cit.,* pp. 74-80.

[119] McNay. *Op. cit.,* p. 134. In chapter four McNay analyses in detail how a postmodern thinker like Baudrillard with his idea of schizophrenic identity replacing coherent subjectivity brings any political activity to a halt.

[120] 1982 text, reproduced in Foucault. *Dits et Écrits II,* pp. 1041-62.

Foucault did not offer 'replacement subjectivities' for the prescriptive ones, because he never gave alternatives,[121] but he indicated what instruments can be used to form one's subjectivity, leaving, then, to each individual the creation of her own 'work of art' without precluding any possibility. Absence of a unique female identity implies multiplicity and diversity of subjectivities. It means to substitute such identity's illusionary unity with heterogeneity's fragmentation and contradiction and to lose steadiness and certainty in favour of vacillation and contingency. Nevertheless it does not reproduce normalisation and exclusion of women who do not recognise themselves in an essentialist female identity and it opens up new routes, visible in the de-essentialising contributions of black and postcolonial feminists.

The absence of a normative framework within the Foucauldian paradigm is considered a limitation by McNay, Nancy Hartsock and Nancy Fraser among others. For McNay Foucault should have established 'certain political aims against which one can evaluate behaviour' and should have retained 'some broader political aims, such as the establishment of non-exploitative social relations, if progressive political change, rather than an anarchic free-for-all is to be established.'[122] Nevertheless this contrasts with Foucault's conception of the role of the intellectual: to modify his own and other's thought, and not to tell others what they have to do.[123]

On the contrary I consider this alleged limitation a positive quality of the Foucauldian paradigm, because it avoids formulating universal norms that do not take into account specific socio-historical contexts, life experiences and the high-speed transformations of contemporary societies. Moreover I do not think it possible for Foucault, and indeed for anybody else, to establish political aims that are suitable, relevant and achievable for all societies and for all groups within them, nor do I believe that the absence of 'broader political aims' necessarily leads to anarchy, because they can be replaced by local and

[121] Foucault's aim was to problematise what was normally seen as solid and customary, not to find alternatives for what he problematised. See *Ibid.* p. 1431.
[122] McNay. *Op. cit.*, p. 146.
[123] Foucault. *Dits et Écrits II,* pp. 1494-5.

specific political aims. Foucault wanted to endow individuals with a critical approach to their realities, so that they could establish political aims and elaborate alternatives specific to their contexts. As Jana Sawicki indicated, women's specific experiences need to be analysed with provisional categories rather than with universal categories, in order to identify policies that are effective, safe and suitable in a certain context.[124]

About the subject's relations with knowledge McNay, referring to Foucault's conception of knowledge 'as the material effect of dominant power regimes', presents her argument that Foucault cannot explain how the subject can possibly have an autonomous and critical perspective on historical and social processes, seen that his/her critical knowledge is still 'a product of a dominant power formation'.[125] In *Surveiller et Punir* Foucault defined knowledge a product of power and stated that 'power and knowledge directly imply one another'.[126] In the 1984 interview 'Le Souci de la Vérité' though, he responded to those who thought that for him knowledge was mingled with power or was the mask of power by giving the example of the hospital as a structure of power in which two different forms of knowledge developed: the psychiatric knowledge, whose epistemological structure could induce scepticism, and the anatomic-pathological knowledge, which was the basis for the development of a scientifically fertile medicine. He then stated:

> Je me suis précisément appliqué à voir comment certaines formes de pouvoir qui étaient du même type pouvaient donner lieu à des savoirs extrêmement différents dans leur objet et dans leur structure. [..] On a donc des structures de pouvoir, des formes institutionnelles assez voisines: internement psychiatrique, hospitalisation médicale, auxquelles sont liées des formes de savoir différentes, entre lesquelles on peut établir des rapports, des relations de conditions, et non pas de cause à effet, ni *a fortiori* d'identité.[127]

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[124] Jana Sawicki. 'Foucault and Feminism: Toward a Politics of Difference', p. 35.
[125] McNay. *Op. cit.,* pp. 148, 153.
[126] 'le pouvoir produit du savoir.. pouvoir et savoir s'impliquent directement l'un l'autre'. Foucault. *Surveiller et Punir*, p. 36. The exact translation of the first sentence is 'power produces *some* knowledge', since Foucault uses 'du' before 'savoir', which is less categorical and universal.
[127] Foucault. *Dits et Écrits II,* p. 1495.

In this quote structures of power and forms of knowledge are linked, but the latter are not effects of the former, which are not always structures of domination. Moreover some forms of knowledge can be fertile, and this would be the case of the critical knowledge of the subject, which therefore finds space in the Foucauldian paradigm. The subject therefore has the heuristic tools to critically analyse the world around her/himself, even if she/he is somewhat constrained.

3) Simone de Beauvoir on female subjectivity

The choice of Simone de Beauvoir's theories might seem awkward in a thesis in which Foucauldian theories are central, since Foucault several times distanced himself from Sartre's sovereign subject, whose presence in *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949) is undeniable. Yet, the main reason that induced me to choose de Beauvoir's reflections on subjectivity is that, as I shall argue, the female subject in *Le Deuxième Sexe* is not exactly a sovereign subject and has an element in common with the Foucauldian subject. My choice is motivated by other reasons too. De Beauvoir provided insights on women that highlighted elements other than sex, such as class, profession, ethnicity, nationality, etc., which Foucault did not consider of primary importance and that the feminist discourse neglected until the 1980's, when intersectional analyses appeared.[128] She never lost sight of 'tangible women', although they mostly belonged to the middle and upper classes, and kept a close contact with reality, experience and matter while theorising, on the contrary of some Anglo-American feminists considered in the previous section. She refused to reduce women to their sexual difference and to a 'femininity' that is a universalised and reified category.

The first chapter of *Le Deuxième Sexe I* is a detailed description of biological and physiological aspects of the lives of many living species, which shows the female as being smaller and weaker than the male and subdued to reproduction in several species, among which the human one. De Beauvoir

[128] See references to intersectionality on p. 36 above.

considered biological and physiological facts undeniable and extremely important, because 'woman's body is one of the essential elements of the situation that she occupies in this world',[129] hence she deemed in bad faith those women who claimed that a woman is just a human being like a man in order to erase the sexual difference. De Beauvoir did not deny that a woman is a human being. She denied the possibility to erase the sex difference, since it is practically demonstrable that a concrete woman is different from a concrete man.

She was so aware of the importance of the sex difference that she, as a philosopher, felt obliged to state her sex if she wanted to define herself, while a male philosopher did not feel the need to state his sex, and she knew that her sex would have been the background of all her statements. In fact she recalled occasions when men had attributed her ideas to her sex. Although she tried to define herself through her speeches and other acts, she was obliged to foreground her sexed body to define herself and her ideas were attributed to her sex. Her female body was always taken into account, regardless of what she was doing, while the male bodies of the men she was conversing with were not considered the backgrounds of their actions. Nevertheless de Beauvoir did not deny her femaleness, because that would have meant to deny her subjectivity. She was more precise in *Le Deuxième Sexe II*, in which about the liberated modern woman she wrote:

> She refuses to limit herself to her role of female because she does not want to mutilate herself; but to repudiate her sex would be a mutilation too. Man is a sexed human being; woman is not a complete individual, and the equal of the male, unless she is also a sexed human being. To give up her femininity is to give up a part of her humanity.[130]

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[129] 'le corps de la femme est un des éléments essentiels de la situation qu'elle occupe en ce monde.' Simone de Beauvoir. *Le Deuxième Sexe I: Les Faits et les Mythes.* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), p. 77.

[130] 'Elle refuse de se cantonner dans son rôle de femelle parce qu'elle ne veut pas se mutiler; mais ce serait aussi une mutilation de répudier son sexe. L'homme est un être humain sexué ; la femme n'est un individu complet, et l'égale du mâle, que si elle est aussi un être humain sexué. Renoncer à sa féminité, c'est renoncer à une part de son humanité.' Simone de Beauvoir. *Le Deuxième Sexe II: L'expérience vécue.* Paris: Gallimard, 1986, p. 601.

She wanted to strike a balance between the two extreme attitudes of locking a woman in her femaleness and making of her a sexless being, which are the two 'alternatives' the sexist ideology of patriarchy offers women: if they want to be men's equals they have to forget their femininity, otherwise they remain inferior females. De Beauvoir instead found a third path that avoided both sexist excesses. To consider the sexed body the background for all our acts means 'at once to claim that it is always a *potential* source of meaning, and to *deny* that it always holds the key to the meaning of a woman's acts. [..] In short, the sex of a body is always there, but it is not always the most important fact about that body.'[131] De Beauvoir did not establish in an absolute way which fact is the most important. In some situations the colour of the skin or the ugliness or beauty of a body can be more important than sex in explaining someone's acts. However for her the body, although important, is only one of the elements that make a woman what she is. It is important because 'the body is not a *thing*, it is a situation: it is our grasp on the world and the outline of our projects'.[132]

The body is one of several situations, such as class, ethnicity, place, relations to others, etc., and it is always placed within them, which all contribute to define a woman and a man. It is through the body that human beings apprehend themselves and the world, a body that is not only sexual parts. It cannot be denied that the body's healthiness or illness, ability or disability, colour, appearance, etc. affect a person's comprehension of the world and of her/himself, probably more than sex. In fact in young children of both sexes the body is 'the instrument that carries out the comprehension of the world: it is through eyes, hands, and not through sexual parts that they apprehend the universe',[133] therefore girls' apprehension of the world does not differ from boys'.

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[131] Toril Moi. *What is a Woman? And Other Essays.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 201.

[132] 'le corps n'est pas une *chose*, il est une situation: c'est notre prise sur le monde et l'esquisse de nos projets.' De Beauvoir. *Le Deuxième Sexe I,* p. 73. Situation is an existentialist category between subjectivity and objectivity that exists within the human being and is a synthesis of the subject's freedom (projects) and facticity, i.e. the world.

[133] 'l'instrument qui effectue la compréhension du monde: c'est à travers les yeux, les mains, non par les parties sexuelles qu'ils appréhendent l'univers.' De Beauvoir. *Le Deuxième Sexe II*, p. 13.

The body though is ambiguous. It is not a pure natural object that sciences can study objectively, as positivists believed, and it is not pure meaning created within social discourse, but it is biological and discursive at the same time. For de Beauvoir this meant that biology could not justify social norms, because humans are not a pure natural species that can be fully explained by biological laws; rather it is society that attributes to biological facts the meanings it finds more convenient. The relationship de Beauvoir established between subjectivity and body is contingent, i.e. true by virtue of the way things in fact are, and not by logical necessity. This means that 'my body will significantly influence both what society -others- make of me, and the kind of choices I will make in response to the Other's image of me, but it is also to acknowledge that no specific form of subjectivity is ever a necessary consequence of having a particular body.'[134]

Despite the importance of a woman's body, 'it still is not what suffices to define her; it has no living reality unless it is accepted by consciousness through actions and within a society'.[135] A woman's body becomes part of her situatedness only when she makes sense of it through her actions and interactions with the world, but it does not make a woman what she is. For existentialists human beings are not given, but they make themselves what they are by their actions throughout all their lives, being therefore 'in process', incomplete human beings until death.[136] In line with the Sartrean motto 'existence precedes essence', de Beauvoir denied that femininity is an essence[137] and unequivocally stated that

> the idea of femininity is artificially defined by customs and fashions, it imposes itself on every woman from the outside; [..] the individual is not free to shape it in her own way. The one who does not conform to it is devalued sexually and, as a consequence, socially, since society has integrated sexual values. [..] A woman who does not wish to

[134] Moi. *Op. cit.,* p. 114.
[135] 'ce n'est pas non plus lui qui suffit à la définir; il n'a de réalité vécue qu'en tant qu'assumé par la conscience à travers des actions et au sein d'une société'. De Beauvoir. *Le Deuxième Sexe I,* p. 77.
[136] De Beauvoir in fact wrote: 'Un existant n'*est* rien d'autre que ce qu'il fait; [..] l'essence ne précède pas l'existence: dans sa pure subjectivité, l'être humain *n'est rien.* On le mesure à ses actes.' *Ibid.* p. 401.
[137] See *Ibid.* p. 402.

shock, who does not intend to be socially devalued must live as woman her condition of woman'.[138]

Although de Beauvoir spoke of herself as Sartre's disciple, in the just quoted sentences she indeed stated that women are not free to shape the idea of femininity and women who do not conform to the idea of femininity society has elaborated are going to be seriously affected. She has theorised a female subject that is definitely not the unconditioned, autonomous, free subject of *L'Être et le Néant* (*Being and Nothingness)*, but a subject who is conditioned by social customs concerning femininity. She could not have implied that transgression of predominant norms was impossible, since she personally led an unconventional life, but she was aware that a female subject could not defy social customs without paying the consequences, as she personally did. A woman who did not wish to be socially rejected was obliged to play by the 'femininity rules' of the society she lived in, she could not be a free and unfettered subject: a woman, like 'each concrete human being is always singularly situated',[139] and she cannot ignore the situations in which she is situated.

De Beauvoir's subject is not Sartre's lonely subject who can only relate to others by enslaving them, so that he can be the only subject/master, although she diligently described it.[140] She stated that modern women were attempting to dominate men only as a reaction to men's oppression. Eager to preserve their sovereign subject position, men were hampering women's attempts to become subjects equal to them and this had started a war between women and men. Yet women only wanted to be recognised by men as equal subjects, just like they recognised men as equal subjects, to create with them a reciprocal relationship of equality, not to dominate them.

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[138] 'l'idée de feminité est définie artificiellement par les coutumes et les modes, elle s'impose du dehors à chaque femme; [..] l'individu n'est pas libre de la modeler à sa guise. Celle qui ne s'y conforme pas se dévalue sexuellement et par conséquent socialement puisque la société a intégré les valeurs sexuelles.[..] Une femme qui ne désire pas choquer, qui n'entend pas socialement se dévaluer doit vivre en femme sa condition de femme'. De Beauvoir. *Le Deuxième Sexe II*, pp. 601-2.

[139] 'tout être humain concret est toujours singulièrement situé'. De Beauvoir. *Le Deuxième Sexe I*, p. 13.

[140] See *Ibid.* pp. 237-8.

De Beauvoir even tried to convince men that if they recognised in women concrete human beings rather than myths, their experience would not lose its richness, intensity and diversity if the experience accepted itself as being intersubjective.[141] These sentences can be better understood if considered within their paragraph, in which de Beauvoir is referring to the existentialist concept of *lived experience*, which is the way a human being makes sense of her/his situation and actions, it is 'sedimented over time through [her/his] interactions with the world, and thus itself becomes part of [her/his] situatedness'.[142] *Lived experience* forms subjectivity. In my opinion, in these sentences de Beauvoir is suggesting that human beings make sense of their situation interacting with others and that the formation of subjectivity happens in an intersubjective reciprocal relationship between equals who, as a result, are both subjects, and not in an unequal relationship between two competitors that will end up creating a free subject and a dominated object.

The subject formation therefore is conditioned not only by social customs but also by other subjects, which is similar to Foucault's position about subjectivation as happening through the social practice of the care of the self, political activity and a reciprocal relationship with others and with the wife in particular.[143] This explains why de Beauvoir saw women in traditional patriarchal societies as non-subjects, while men were subjects: women recognised men as subjects, but men did not recognise women as subjects and without that recognition women could not possibly be subjects. Nevertheless the fact that women were not subjects in the past was not determining for their future. De Beauvoir spoke against those who wanted to reduce woman to what she was in the past or to what she is in the present, because it is not possible to determine once and for all 'un être qui est transcendance et dépassement'; for her 'la femme n'est pas une réalité figée, mais un devenir'.[144] There is a striking resemblance between the just quoted statements about woman and the following Foucault's statement about

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[141] See *Ibid.* pp. 405-6.
[142] Moi. *Op. cit.,* p. 63, [her/his] replaces 'my'.
[143] See Introduction pp. 29-32.
[144] De Beauvoir. *Le Deuxième Sexe I,* p. 73. 'a being that is transcendence and overcoming'; 'woman is not a fixed reality, but a becoming'. Another similar statement: 'On ne nait pas femme: on le devient' is in de Beauvoir. *Le Deuxième Sexe II*, p. 13.

homosexuals, which I am quoting in French to better show the terminology used:

> [Foucault] – Le sexe n'est pas une fatalité. [..] Nous n'avons pas à découvrir que nous sommes homosexuels. [..] Nous devons plutôt créer un mode de vie gay. Un *devenir* gay.
>
> [interviewer] - Et c'est quelque chose qui est sans limites?
>
> [Foucault] - Oui, bien sûr.[145]

Both philosophers reject a deterministic bond between sex and the subject, who is ultimately a becoming, who perpetually transcends her/himself.[146] De Beauvoir though is well aware that the will to transcendence in women is constantly hindered within patriarchal societies, which allow women only the role of inessential Others steeped in immanence:

> She is determined and differentiated in relation to man and not the latter in relation to her; she is the inessential facing the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute: she is the Other.[147]
>
> Destined to the male since her childhood, accustomed to see in him a sovereign to whom she is not allowed to be equal, the woman who has not suffocated her claim of human being will dream of... mingling with the sovereign subject; there is no other way out for her but to lose herself body and soul in the one designated to her as the absolute, as the essential.[148]

The many examples of women's lives de Beauvoir gave mainly referred to women who lived in the past in the traditional French patriarchal society, in which women were not subjects yet. They were the Other condemned to inferiority by patriarchy, not by biology. They were formed as men's passive objects, so that men could face them as the only subjects and masters,

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[145] Foucault. *Dits et Écrits II,* pp. 1554-5 (1982 interview). 'Sex is not fate. [..] We do not have to discover that we are homosexuals. [..] We must rather create a gay way of life. A gay *becoming.*/ Is it something without limits?/ Yes, of course.'

[146] See Karen Vintges. "Must we Burn Foucault?' Ethics as Art of Living: Simone de Beauvoir and Michel Foucault', *Continental Philosophy Review*, 34:2, (June 2001), pp. 165-81 for other shared elements in the ethics of both philosophers.

[147] 'Elle se détermine et se différencie par rapport à l'homme et non celui-ci par rapport à elle; elle est l'inessentiel en face de l'essentiel. Il est le Sujet, il est l'Absolu: elle est l'Autre.' De Beauvoir. *Le Deuxième Sexe I*, p. 15.

[148] 'destinée au mâle dès son enfance, habituée à voir en lui un souverain à qui il ne lui est pas permis de s'égaler, ce que rêvera la femme qui n'a pas étouffé sa revendication d'être humain, c'est ... de se confondre avec le sujet souverain; il n'y a pas pour elle d'autre issue que de se perdre corps et âme en celui qu'on lui désigne comme l'absolu, comme l'essentiel.' De Beauvoir. *Le Deuxième Sexe II*, p. 547.

something they could not do with other men. Women did not know that they could become subjects and had no means to do it, since family, morality, education, religion, society all co-operated in making them believe that they were created only to devote themselves completely to men. Women came to believe that the only way for them to possess themselves and the universe, 'to exist sovereignly',[149] was to alienate themselves in the sovereign men that owned the universe.

Woman 'does not stand in front of man as a subject but as an object paradoxically endowed with subjectivity; she accepts herself at the same time as *self* and as *other*'.[150] Women had role of objects in front of men and de Beauvoir saw in them also men's accomplices, which is what also Bordo affirmed in the previous section, because they believed too easily and willingly the lies they were told by men, tempted more by the irresponsibility and easy life of the object rather than by the responsibilities and hard life of the subject. Considering that in de Beauvoir's times the fruition of such easy and irresponsible life was restricted to a minority of French women from urban middle and upper classes, I do not think that it might explain why the majority of French women of the time believed men's lies. This probably happened because those women did not know any different way of life, were mostly illiterate, had very little awareness of themselves and their situation. Hence they could not be considered men's accomplices, because they ignored that there was a choice.

Women were not subjects in front of the world either:

> she can feel lonely in the world's *arms*: she never stands *facing* it, unique and sovereign. [..] It is very rare that woman engages herself in a distressing face-to-face with the given world. The constraints surrounding her and all the tradition that weigh on her prevent her from feeling responsible for the universe: this is the reason for her mediocrity.[151]

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[149] 'exister souverainement'. *Ibid.* p. 556.

[150] 'elle ne se dresse pas en face de l'homme comme un sujet mais comme un objet paradoxalement doué de subjectivité; elle s'assume à la fois comme *soi* et comme *autre*'. *Ibid.* p. 646.

[151] 'Elle peut se sentir solitaire *au sein* du monde: jamais elle ne se dresse *en face* de lui, unique et souveraine. [..] il est très rare que le femme assume pleinement l'angoissant tête-à-

De Beauvoir rightly wants to prove that women achieved little in the world outside their homes not because they were intrinsically inferior to men, but because they were trained to see the outside world as a male business only and therefore they did not take much interest in it.

With the help of the theoretical tools delineated above and others that will be introduced later, I will identify in the short stories the following: what kinds of subjects the selected authors present; how they construct them; if, how and which of the many elements examined in this chapter influence their construction; if there are any further influences that were not contemplated by the theorists considered; what narrative strategies the authors employ in the construction of their characters and their fictional worlds. To deal with the last point I will refer to various theorists and practitioners of the short story genre and to structuralists/narratologists, whose theories will guide my analysis of the structures and strategies of the stories. It is through such analytical approach that I will engage with the aesthetic qualities of the selected short stories, rather than issuing unsubstantiated value judgements on the stories.

The aforesaid research questions will guide the textual analysis of the selected short stories in chapters two-four, which will be preceded by a general background on the short story in chapter one.

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tête avec le monde donné. Les contraintes dont elle est entourée et toute la tradition qui pèsent sur elle empêchent qu'elle ne se sente responsable de l'univers: voilà la profonde raison de sa médiocrité.' *Ibid.* pp. 638-9.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SHORT STORY GENRE AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

1. Theories and definitions of the genre.

Studies about the short story theory have not stopped flowing since the 19th century and are still so abundant[152] that it is impossible to survey them without subtracting vital space to the main focus of this thesis. Hence the only contributions I will examine here are the ones that clarify the interconnection between the genre, self, marginality and femininity, which has been left pending from the first page of the introduction, and that will be recurrent in the close readings of the selected texts. Among those contributions is vital Frank O'Connor's *The Lonely Voice: a Study of the Short Story* (1963), the first critical study that identified the essence of the genre by juxtaposing it with the novel. O'Connor believed that the short story differs from the novel not so much for its form as for its ideology. The novel still presents the ideas of human society as civilised and of human beings as living in a community. '[T]he short story remains by its very nature remote from the community—romantic, individualistic, and intransigent', characterised by 'an intense awareness of human loneliness', showing an attraction towards 'outlawed figures wandering about the fringes of society' who are 'submerged population

[152] One of the oldest studies in English is Edgar Allan Poe's 'Review of *Twice-Told Tales*' (1842), reprinted in Charles E. May (ed.). *Short Story Theories.* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1976), pp. 45-51, which introduced the concept of 'unity of impression'; several 21st century studies are included in Per Winther, Jakob Lothe and Hans H. Skei (eds.). *The Art of Brevity: Excursions in Short Fiction Theory and Analysis.* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004); many more in English and Arabic are quoted in the bibliography.

groups, whatever these may be at any given time—tramps, artists, lonely idealists, dreamers, and spoiled priests.'[153]

In a Foucauldian interpretation of O'Connor's words it could be said that because those individuals escape homogeneity, the normalising power of discipline individualises them and makes of their 'abnormal' differences permanent identities that isolate and exclude them, who do not form alternative marginal communities.[154] Short stories' characters can be despondent not only for material considerations, but also for spiritual ones, because they are Hamlets, 'thinkers, [who] merely sit back and monologize',[155] who can be successful public individuals, though isolated and forlorn in their private worlds.

In his latest book[156] Sabry Hafez has indicated that those Hamlets in their monologues express their fundamental need of being distinguished as unique and special individuals,[157] their effort of subjectivation and their experience of fragmentation. Those elements find their preferred medium of objectification in the short story and not in the novel, in which the homogeneous 'imagined community' and its 'deep horizontal comradeship'[158] usually triumph to the detriment of the diversity of identities and of the conflicts among individuals that exist within the community, which are overlooked for the sake of the larger picture. The short story instead shows that the image of homogeneous and harmonic community usually present in the novel is often achieved by silencing groups and individuals that are marginalised within the community and within the novel, although this is not the case in some modernist or post-modernist novels.[159]

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[153] Frank O'Connor. *The Lonely Voice: a Study of the Short Story.* (Cork: Cork City Council, 2003), pp. 5-6.
[154] See Introduction pp. 15, 20-1 for Foucault's individualisation and cellular individuality.
[155] O'Connor. *Op. cit.,* p. 25. I have used the sentence in the plural rather than in the singular of the original and added [who].
[156] Sabry Hafez. *The Quest for Identities: the Development of the Modern Arabic Short Story.* (London: Saqi Books, 2007); I will refer to pp. 36-40 of the introduction.
[157] Is it always the Hamlets' need to be distinguished or could it also be a community marking them out through individualisation?
[158] The references for Anderson's quotes used by Hafez are in Hafez. *Op. cit.,* p. 349. For the definition of subjectivation see Introduction p. 13.
[159] Hager Ben Driss has showed in her analysis of a 2002 novel by Laylā al-ᶜUthmān that 'the border of the text abounds with marginalized cases and voices' that are a subversive critique

The short story instead does not try to homogenise the outcasts with the rest of the community for the sake of the community's imaginary harmony. On the contrary it gives them the opportunity to search for their own identities, intended as chosen, not inherited and non-essentialist, which makes of the short story 'the literary genre most suited for the elaboration of the reflexive projection of the individual self.'[160] From this last statement it ensues that the short story is the ideal genre for studying the subject and subjectivation, and particularly so within a Foucauldian theoretical framework, because those outcasts search for chosen rather than inherited identities, in line with the Foucauldian concept of identity as constructed by the self.[161]

Pratt indicates that short stories favour marginality also in the topics, since they often include material that has been excluded from the novel because of being literarily and socially devalued, such as stigmatised topics, orality, popular and regional culture, etc.,[162] as we will see in the stories analysed in the following three chapters.

The short story is also connected to women, as Huwaydā Ṣāliḥ demonstrates in her argument. She starts from Sayyid al-Wakīl's consideration of the novel as the mature, masculine, superior, hence central, literary genre and of the short story as the minor narrative form that lived on the margin of the masculine novel like a female. Since the very beginning the short story was characterised by marginality and represented a latent threat to the novel's centrality, which became palpable with modernism, when the short story revealed itself as the embodiment of two modernist desires: to destroy the supremacy of the form and to kill the father. Being rebellion against the centrality, masculinity and superiority of the novel an innate feature of the short story, Ṣāliḥ sees this genre as 'the closest to the female spirit',[163] which

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of the central character; see Hager Ben Driss. 'Women Narrating the Gulf: A Gulf of Their Own', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 36:2, (2005), pp. 152-71, quote on p. 158.

[160] Hafez. *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

[161] See Introduction pp. 13-4 for the construction of identity.

[162] Mary Louise Pratt. 'The Short Story: the Long and the Short of it', *Poetics*, 10, (1981), pp. 182-90.

[163] Huwaydā Ṣāliḥ, (July 2007): "Tajliyyāt al-Dhāt al-Unthawiyyah fī Tajribat Ḥayāh al-Rāyyis". WWW document, URL: http://www.alkalimah.com/Data/2007/7/1/Howaidasaleh.xml, retrieved on 20/09/2007, pp. 6-7.

could at least partially explain why it is the most popular genre among Saudi women writers.[164]

A further link between the short story and women could be found in their shared marginality within the literary fields of Arab countries. Despite the lack of extensive transnational research on this topic, it is possible to find in few sources indications of women writers' marginalisation. In a 1992 conference on Arabic literature Salwā Bakr protested against the marginalisation of women writers, underrepresented in the conference.[165] Laṭīfah al-Zayyāt has defined as partial, limited and subjective, the attitude of literary critics towards women writers' achievements, which are depreciated, while their authors are deemed narcissists who content themselves with the surface of things, and hence cannot reach their essence, nor the same heights of male writers.[166] Since these words are included in the introduction to a collection of short stories of women writers from several Arab countries, they do not seem to refer to a national specificity but rather to a general trend.

Two other sources seem to confirm that this trend indeed existed in Saudi Arabia at least until sometime ago: a 1983 source very briefly states 'the literary and intellectual field in the kingdom opened its arms only to men';[167] a 1994 source devotes a chapter to the tactics male critics/reviewers use to marginalise, discredit and relegate to the private women writers.[168] Other proofs of the bias against women writers are the harsh censorship and punishments that their sexually charged literary works attract, much harsher than those reserved to much more sexually explicit material written by their male colleagues.[169] One of the aims of this thesis is to refute those biased,

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[164] Saddeka Arebi. *Women and Words in Saudi Arabia: the Politics of Literary Discourse.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 31.

[165] This episode is reported in Hudā al-Ṣaddah. 'Women's Writing in Egypt: Reflections on Salwa Bakr', in Deniz Kandiyoti (ed.). *Gendering the Middle East: Emerging Perspectives.* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), p. 127. On p. 132 al-Ṣaddah also refers to Nawāl al-Sa^{c}dāwī's marginalisation in Egypt.

[166] Laṭīfah al-Zayyāt. *Kull Hadhā al-Ṣawt al-Jamīl.* (Al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Mar'ah al-^{c}Arabiyyah li-l-Nashr, 1994), p. 10. These words closely resemble the opinion about women writers expressed by the male character of al-Turkī's story "Al-Marāyā"; see below p. 232.

[167] Laylā Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ. *Adab al-Mar'ah fī al-Jazīrah wa-al-Khalīj al-^{c}Arabī: al-Mamlakah al-^{c}Arabiyyah al-Su^{c}ūdiyyah, Dawlat al-Baḥrayn, Dawlat al-Qaṭar, Dawlat al-Imārāt al-^{c}Arabiyyah al-Muttaḥidah.* ([Al-Kuwayt?]: Maṭba^{c} al-Yaqẓah, 1983), p. 28.

[168] Arebi. *Op. cit.*, pp. 246-67.

[169] For examples about this specific issue see Faqir (ed.). *Op. cit.*, pp. 11-3.

unsubstantiated value judgements by proving the value of women's contributions to the genre through a structural analysis of their short stories.

Even in the case of the Emirates, where the short story is quite widespread and women writers today considerably outnumber male writers,[170] Ṣabrī complains of the 'secretiveness' surrounding the short story in general, which is a result of editorial strategies and little consideration for the genre, and women's short stories in particular. Women still use pen-names, their works are difficult to access and cultural magazines do not publicise their works.[171] Considering the few sources available it is hence possible to say that generally women writers share the short story's marginality within some Arab literary fields. Nevertheless the next section will show that the selected female authors subvert such literary marginality by contributing to the short story's prominence in most countries examined. Through the thesis it will be possible to see if they use their literary marginality,[172] their position of women 'standing simultaneously inside and outside the 'nation' and, occasionally, the culture itself'[173] to challenge the alleged homogeneity of the 'imagined community' of Arab women presented in the media.

2. Historical, stylistic, thematic development

Due to the limited space available and to the already existing extensive studies, three elements are here omitted: a) the complex sociocultural and political process (formation of national identity, press role, transformation of worldviews and lifestyles, new reading public, new literary sensibility, etc.) that

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[170] The percentage of women writers is high when compared to the number of male writers and of inhabitants in the Emirates; see ᶜAbd al-Fattāḥ Ṣabrī. *Ṣūrat al-Mar'ah fī al-Qiṣṣah al-Nisā'iyyah al-Imārātiyyah: Muqārabah Awwaliyyah*. (Al-Shāriqah: Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Udabā' al-Imārāt, 2005), p. 37.

[171] *Ibid.* pp. 7, 15.

[172] The selected authors' biographies demonstrate that they are prominent women within their communities because of their education and posts. Hence I do not find relevant here Spivak's conceptions of subaltern [as defined in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (September 2004): "The Trajectory of the Subaltern in my Work". WWW video, URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZHH4ALRFHw, retrieved on 06/04/2009 and in other sources listed in the bibliography], except for the fact that those who could not speak in the past now can speak and make important contributions to the genre with their speech.

[173] Hafez. *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

has engendered the emergence of the genre in Arabic literature; b) the issue of the endogenous or exogenous character of the genre in Arabic literature; c) a survey of the still traditional literary forms that foreran the short stories in the 1870-1900 period and of their main practitioners, such as Salīm al-Bustānī (1846-84), ᶜAbd Allah al-Nadīm (1843/44/45/54-96),[174] father and son Ibrāhīm (1845-1906) and Muḥammad (1868-1930) al-Muwailiḥi.[175] This section instead starts from the turn of the 19th century, which is considered the moment in which narrative forms take non-traditional paths, and aims at diachronically delineating the various phases of development of the genre in the literatures only of those countries of the Levant, Maghreb and Gulf whose representatives have been selected for closer scrutiny.[176] The section considers writers whose contributions have been important in the short story's evolution and in the formation of subsequent generations of writers, without detailing the production of each single author. Since women writers are the focus of this thesis, they have been given priority as and when their writings appear.

Since the short story is the genre on which this thesis is focused, it is not pertinent to recapitulate women's first literary experiences, which were not in this genre and have already been explored.[177] Considering the shortage of space, the exclusion of many writers is inevitable, but this is not a denial of the literary value of those excluded writers' achievements. This section will be divided into three parts (Levant, Gulf and Maghreb), each following the chronological development of the genre within national boundaries in order to

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[174] Differences among sources regarding authors' dates of birth are common; to save space I will insert a slash among the dates to indicate the variations found (in economic format). If only one date is quoted this is the date of birth. A question mark indicates that I have been unable to find the date.

[175] For points a) and c) see Sabry Hafez. *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse: A Study in the Sociology of Modern Arabic Literature.* (London: Saqi Books, 1993), pp. 37-136. Some of the sources dealing with point b) are: Mahmoud Manzalaoui. *Arabic Short Stories, 1945-1965.* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press), 1985, pp. 16-9; Heidi Toelle and Katia Zakharia. *À la Découverte de la Littérature Arabe: du VIe Siècle à Nos Jours.* ([Paris?]: Flammarion, 2003), p. 215; Sabry Hafez. 'The Modern Arabic Short Story' in M. M. Badawi (ed.). *Modern Arabic Literature* in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 270.

[176] I have not considered the other countries for lack of space, but I have included in the bibliography some of the studies that cover them.

[177] Only two works among several available: Miriam Cooke. 'Arab Women Writers' in Badawi (ed.). *Op. cit.*, pp. 443-62; Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke (eds.). *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing.* (London: Virago, 1990).

show the genre's national specificities. The definitions of the main tendencies visible in the genre are included in the Levant subsection, which I find pertinent because those tendencies manifested themselves in the Levant first.

2.1. Egypt and the Levant

Due to the similar development through which the short story has gone in the countries of this area, I have divided this section in six periods and in each period all selected countries are considered synchronically.

a) The turn of the 19th century

The last years of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century saw a simultaneous decisive rupture with the past along romantic lines in Lebanon and Egypt and along realistic lines in Palestine with the appearance of authors that developed their own short narrative works independently from traditional forms.

In Lebanon the rupture was represented by the works of Labībah Hāshim (1880-1947), whose short narratives were mainly tormented sentimental love stories ending happily, which nevertheless had three merits: a) they pioneered the use of plot and denouement, emphasising action over characters; b) they started to move away from stereotypical characters towards individual characters; c) with their simple language they popularised fiction among the female readers of *Fatāt al-Sharq* (1906-39), the magazine she edited and in which she published her original pieces and translations.

Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān (1883-1931)[178] sought to create new narrative forms that had substantial repercussions in the Levant and in the rest of the Arab countries. In his short pieces he aimed at breaking down the distinction between prose and poetry and at proposing a new vision of the world and of the human being as an autonomous subject freely adopting a conduct with a

[178] The influence of Jubrān on romantic writers was too important to be excluded, although he lived in the *Mahjar* rather than in the Levant.

demanding ethics. He used a very emotive language charged with religious overtones and biblical references, particularly when treating his favourite themes of corrupt Christian clergymen and social injustice.

Jubrān had some elements in common with Muṣṭafā Luṭfī al-Manfalūṭī (1876/7-1924), who represented the romantic rupture in Egypt. They both criticised the evils of their societies (oppression of women, marriages among very young women and elderly men, polygamy, etc.) and shared a didactic intent that induced them to intervene in the narrative to deliver moral messages. Their narratives were more sophisticated than those of their predecessors because they succeeded in overcoming stylised human types and creating individual characters, but those characters were still superficially depicted in black and white. The structures of their works were still incoherent. Nevertheless their influence on later generations of short story writers should not be overlooked, particularly al-Manfalūṭī's, who was admired by his contemporaries for his often moralistic tone, his sentimental romanticism and his innovative elegant style. His style, which was a middle way between the traditional ornate and the simpler modern ones, contributed to the evolution of a modern prose style, while his narratives satisfied the needs for fiction of the common readers of his times, who widely read him.

In Palestine it was Khalīl Baydas (1875-1949) that heralded the change through his magazine *al-Nafā'is al-ᶜAṣriyyah* (1908-14, 1919-23), in which he published his translations of Russian literature and his own original texts, which he consciously wrote in the form of realistic short stories.[179] In the introductions to his translations he displays a remarkable level of awareness of narrative's educational nature, verisimilitude, techniques and of the enlightening role of writers, although he did not apply all his theoretical maturity to his own short stories. Despite his authorial intrusions, excessive didacticism and moralising intent, weak characterisation and abuse of the surprise element, Baydas' works is important in the development of the short

[179] Yāghī attributes Baydas' realism particularly to Pushkin's influence; see ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Yāghī. *Fī al-Adab al-Filasṭīnī al-Ḥadīth qabla al-Nakbah wa baᶜdahā.* (Al-Kuwayt: Sharikat Kāẓimah li-l-Nashr wa al-Tarjamah wa al-Tawzīᶜ, 1983), p. 59.

story because he gave much importance to verisimilitude in his depiction of reality, and in particular of social injustice. He was the first writer to consider the short story the most suitable genre for the representation of outcasts and the first Palestinian writer to treat Palestine's political situation, hence Palestinian literature starts with him.[180]

b) The transition towards romanticism and realism

The second and third decades of the 20th century were a period of political and intellectual turmoil in Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Egypt. Several uprisings against European imperialism took place, often violently crushed; nationalism became the main drive of politicians and intellectuals, with great repercussions on the literary production of the time. Literati now strove for the creation of a literature that was national, rational, critical, realistic, integrated with European literatures' accomplishments, not didactic. They confirmed the previous generation's break with traditional forms and ornate language and their orientation towards meeting readers' needs. It is in such a climate that the short story continued to develop in the Levant. Like Baydas, who continued to publish in the 1920's, the writers of this period possessed and displayed a fair theoretical knowledge of the genre in the introductions to their collections, which they utilised as a tool to accustom readers to the genre's innovative conventions and to justify their work as morally and socially useful. Unlike Baydas they were very aware of the genre's limits and nature, and they set for themselves the ambitious tasks to perfect the genre and overcome their predecessors' failures. A cursory look at the oeuvres of the most influential of those writers reveals though that sometimes they did not realise such aspirations, but their achievements are still fundamental in the evolution of the short story.

Egyptian born Muḥammad Taymūr (1892-1921) was the first among the authors of this period to: a) write short narrative pieces that most resembled short stories, which he published in the magazine *al-Sufūr*; b) theorise about a

[180] Opinion expressed in Isabella Camera d'Afflitto. *Letteratura Araba Contemporanea: dalla Nahḍah a Oggi*. (Roma: Carocci, 1998), p. 227.

new literary discourse that broke all ties with the traditional one and about the short story genre in particular; c) write with the intent to establish such discourse rather than for advocating reforms. Despite the fact that he did not overcome al-Nadīm's gallery of themes and morally reproachable human types, Taymūr's artistic presentation is maturer, definitely less sentimental, more realistic (de Maupassant's realism was a major influence on him), although still marred by didacticism. He experimented with the use of irony, of similarity and contrast in his characterisation, of different narrative forms, such as epistles and diaries, which he incorporated in his texts.

Syrian émigrés living in Egypt and publishing there in the early 1920's, connoisseurs of French literature, the brothers ʿĪsā (189?-1922) and Shiḥātah ʿUbayd (189?-1961) were writers and keen theorists who distinguished themselves among their contemporaries for several reasons: a) they employed psychology and psychoanalysis to overcome the two-dimensional characters of their predecessors and create realistic characters that recounted verisimilar situations as per their experience, a complete novelty for female characters. b) Through their analysis of how hereditary and environmental factors' affected their characters' behaviours and problems they gave Arabic realism a long-lasting naturalist tint. c) Their suggestive fictional language upheld multilayered narratives and included Levantine dialectal words within a simple *fuṣḥā* when realism required them. d) They introduced unexplored themes, e.g. customs, rituals and intersexual relations within Egyptian, particularly Christian, families; how spousal incompatibility affected Egyptian families; Egyptian bourgeois women's daily lives, conditions, emancipation attempts, changing perception of themselves. Their works though suffered from narratological didacticism, because they stuffed the narrative with the literary theories announced in the introductions. Possibly because they were overburdened with concepts, some of their short stories had the structure of longer narrative forms rather than of short stories, but their coherent narrative, progressing action, technical devices and realistically described characters and actions were great improvements.

Notwithstanding the aforesaid authors' contributions to the maturation of the short story, the greatest contribution came from *al-Madrasah al-Ḥadīthah*

(The Modern School) (Cairo 1917-26), a group of young ambitious writers, such as Maḥmūd Taymūr (1894-1973), Maḥmūd Ṭāhir Lāshīn (1894-1954) and Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī (1905-92), who through their weekly *al-Fajr* (1925-7) created a new literary sensibility and enlarged the potential reading public for short stories. Influenced by Russian literature, they aspired to found a national narrative literature that could: a) break with tradition and start afresh; b) treat specific Egyptian issues and include Egyptian human types in order to attract Egyptian readers unaccustomed to the genre; c) find the human and universal dimension in those Egyptian issues and types, so that their short stories could have a wider relevance; d) treat social and political themes, e.g. drunkenness, polygamy, adultery, marriages between old men and very young women, etc., safeguarding its autonomy, forms and value as literary endeavour, without becoming a mere propaganda or edification tool. If considered singularly, the individual contributions of the members of *al-Madrasah al-Ḥadīthah* differ considerably in qualities and quantity, as several works have already illustrated.[181] Nevertheless their influence was still felt in the themes, sometimes plots and some of the faults of the short stories Najīb Maḥfūẓ (1911-2006) wrote and published in the 1930's and early 1940's.

That period also witnessed the publication of the first short stories by Egyptian women. ᶜĀ'ishah ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān (1912-74), commonly known as Bint al-Shāṭi', published her stories in *al-Ahrām*, *al-Hilāl* and other newspapers in the 1930's and collected them in the 1940's. She became very famous for her short stories that treated the problems and harsh life of Egyptian peasants, and female peasants in particular, and that presented female types based on the knowledge of women she derived from her daily life, which gained her a prize from the Academy of Arabic Language in Cairo.

Sahīr al-Qalamāwī (1911-97) published her first collection *Aḥādīth Jaddatī* (My Grandmother's Tales) in 1935. The collection presents a current theme of the time, i.e. the contrast between old generation's women, represented by the grandmother, and new generation's women, represented

[181] See Hafez. *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse,* pp. 199-259; Hafez. *The Quest for Identities*, pp. 88-130.

by the granddaughter. The generational contrast evolves into a contrast between past and present, between which al-Qalamāwī does not present a clear rupture or an outward, definite battle, but rather a relation based on mutual understanding. A similar solution is visible also in the harmony al-Qalamāwī pursues on the formal and thematic level between the contemporary content of her short stories and the utilisation of the traditional narrative structure of *Alf Laylah wa Laylah.*

In Syria the short story in the 1930's developed around two literary magazines founded in those years: *al-Thaqāfah* and *al-Ṭalīᶜah*, and the first writers who contributed to bring the Syrian short story to a higher level than in the previous two decades were ᶜAlī Khalqī (1911-84) and Muḥammad al-Najjār (1902-62). They both treated social issues, such as intersexual, intergenerational and interclass relations, with frankness, but while the former also dealt with psychological issues, the latter preferred intellectual and moral issues of his time. Al-Najjār used to underline in the preambles to his stories that he took them from reality as newspapers do, which confirmed the move towards a naturalistic-tinted realism of the narrative of those years, but at the same time he utilised features of popular tales: he specified an addressee, a local and known setting and a time; he used dialectal words and expressions. Khalqī instead valorised more the artistic elements of the short story: he was aware of his stories being representations of reality rather than pure transpositions, utilised a simple language, showed a refined sensitivity and occasionally resorted to emotive expression. His collections are considered an important step in the evolution from romantic tales to the artistic and realistic Syrian short story.[182]

The group al-ᶜUṣbah al-ᶜAsharah (the Group of Ten) 'revolutionized the Beirut literary scene in the 1930s under the influence of the *Mahjar* poets and

[182] Opinion expressed in Aḥmad Jāsim al-Ḥusayn. *Al-Qiṣṣah al-Qaṣīrah al-Sūriyyah wa Naqduhā fī al-Qarn al-ᶜIshrīn.* (Dimashq: Ittiḥād al-Kuttāb al-ᶜArab, 2001), of which I have accessed the electronic version, which has no page numbers. http://www.awu-dam.org/book/01/study01/344-b-j/book01-sd007.htm is the permanent link to the relevant section.

the French naturalist school'.[183] Khalīl Taqiyy al-Dīn (?-1987), a member of this group, was considered the most important contributor to the development of the genre in that period, because of his lyrical language, use of imagination, use of psychological introspection and treatment of the theme of the bond between Lebanese migrants and Lebanon.

In 1930's Palestine Maḥmūd Sayf al-Dīn al-Īrānī (1914-74) started publishing and while Hafez includes him among the romantic writers,[184] Yāghī well distinguishes his school, devoted to socialist ideals, from the romantic one and underlines how such ideals crowded his 1930's works and tended to overshadow the narrative, despite his awareness of the artistic needs of narrative, probably because he considered art a means of social reform and the artist at the service of society. Al-Īrānī's 1940's works instead showed an evident maturation in their better harmonisation of ideological content and artistic form, which progressed even further in the works he published after the *Nakbah*.[185]

c) *The romantic short story*

The influence of *al-Madrasah al-Ḥadīthah* extended also to romanticism and realism, which started to appear in the 1930's in Egypt and in the 1940's in the rest of the Levant, against the background of the failed attempts to gain independence from European countries and the Second World War.[186] Hafez in fact considers romanticism 'a natural product of the work of ...Maḥmūd Taymūr', while realism 'made its contributions in the framework of realistic presentation, as elaborated and developed by... the New School'.[187] It must be stressed that romanticism and realism in Arabic literature were not schools or rigidly separated movements, they coexisted until the 1960's and many writers bestrode the two trends contemporarily,[188] among whom Maḥmūd Taymūr,

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[183] Julie Scott Meisami, and Paul Starkey (eds.). *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*. (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 758.
[184] Hafez. 'The Modern Arabic Short Story' in Badawi (ed.). *Op. cit.*, p. 296.
[185] Yāghī. *Op. cit.*, pp. 66-70. Yāghī in the same book places al-Īrānī's 1950-60's collections within the romantic current; see *Ibid.* p. 101.
[186] The first pioneers of modernist narrative also appeared in Egypt in the 1940's, as it will be outlined later.
[187] Hafez. 'The Modern Arabic Short Story' in Badawi (ed.). *Op. cit.*, pp. 291-2.
[188] This probably explains why critics very often differ in their classifications of writers' oeuvres.

whose short stories evolved dramatically from the didacticism and social criticism of the 1920's to the themes that will dominate all romantic works: exaltation of nature, which is now considered a living creature, of chaste love, of arts and of the artist. Under the clear influence of European romanticism, arts became the means to go beyond the logic and the rational into the unknown that only the artist, an individual endowed of an extraordinary sensitivity, could access and then reveal to commoners through his artistic productions, functioning as a mediator between the sacred space of nature and the extra-rational and profane everyday life. The typical romantic hero, who often was an artist, was perpetually frustrated within a society that could not understand him because of his uncommon ideas, expectations and dreams; hence he preferred to live in a private world of his own, devoted to art and/or love, which relieved him of the sorrow social frustration and political problems caused. Stylistically romantic short stories often were accurate in the expression of emotions' nuances and aesthetic features, but their structure was lacking because the various components were not well connected and designed. Apart from these common features that were present in all romantic works, it is possible to distinguish within romanticism between 'proper' romantic works and sentimental-escapist ones: the former helped the formal and thematic development of the short story, as the realist trend did; the latter with its sentimentality and exaggeration helped to make the short story a widely read genre, but it hampered its artistic evolution. In fact by popularising a slack version of the genre it made difficult the reception of works that had stronger artistic connotations, leaving writers to fight contemporaneously against misconceptions and for new appropriate conceptions of the short story. The sentimental-escapist variety of romanticism was widespread in all countries of the Levant, but since it did not contribute much to the evolution of the short story genre it will be omitted.

In Egypt Muḥammad Ḥassūnah (1908-58?) and Sa^{c}d Makkāwī (1916-85) both treated the theme of the rebellion against social norms, particularly of female characters; Ḥassūnah coloured romanticism with patriotism and Makkāwī with his coherently constructed romantic hero who had the

destructive tendencies of a Byronic hero. Women writers found in this trend one of the very first possibilities to express their feelings, thoughts and points of view, something that they could do rarely before because of their social subjection. Romantic women writers, despite their rebellion against the cultural institutions that suffocated them, did not challenge the dualisms or norms those institutions imposed on them in the name of the specificities of femininity and masculinity; they only aimed at gaining a little space, within those dualisms and norms, in which they could be freer and express themselves. Even their insistence on individuality was a desire to distinguish themselves accompanied by a desire to belong, rather than a desire to break free. Hudā al-Ṣaddah underlines that, although most of the romantic works were of a lower artistic value, they still had their importance because they presented the feminine world from a feminine point of view, which was unusual, and reached a vast number of readers; more valid artistically were the short stories of Ṣūfī ᶜAbd Allah (1925), Zaynab Rushdī (1936-98) and Fawziyyah Muhrān (1931), who started publishing in the 1950's.[189]

In Syria ᶜAbd al-Salām ᶜUjaylī (1919-2006) treated political themes, such as the 1948 Palestinian war, and social ones, such as the relation between science and faith and the belittlement of artists within Syrian society; differently from many of his contemporaries, ᶜUjaylī built his works with coherent structures.[190] Among women publishing short stories of a certain value in those years was Ulfah al-Idilbī (1912-2007), whose first collection *Qiṣaṣ Shāmiyyah* (Syrian Stories) was published in 1954. Ṣubḥī Ḥadīdī considered the form, language and narrative techniques she used in her short stories still in an explorative phase, even when their content was traditional and romantic or when their style was 'photographic realistic', as some other critics called it,

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[189] Raḍwā ᶜĀshūr, Firyāl Ghazūl, Amīnah Rashīd [et al.] (eds.). *Dhākirah li-l-Mustaqbal: Mawsūᶜat al-Kātibah al-ᶜArabiyyah* (1873-1999). (Al-Qāhirah: al-Majlis al-Aᶜlā li-l-Thaqāfah, 2004), vol. 2, p. 22.

[190] For more details see Hafez. 'The Modern Arabic Short Story' in Badawi (ed.). *Op. cit.*, pp. 295-6.

or 'realist-symbolic' as he calls it.[191] Her stories showed mainly the life, endangered habits and conventions of the upper class and particularly of its women, and the issues affecting women's lives, which gave her stories also a documentary value, but without any open criticism. The influence of Taymūr's romanticism on her was mitigated by that of Ḥassūnah's patriotism, which induced her not to lose sight of the reality in which she lived and to use the short story to treat patriotic, national and moral issues, such as the fight against French imperialism, landowners' exploitation of peasants, etc.

Yāghī considers Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā (1920-94) the head of the romantic trend in Palestine before the *Nakbah*, a trend that after the *Nakbah* was characterised by the constant presence of hopelessness and grief, together with a strong patriotism.[192] The *Nakbah* also marked the creation of two groups of literati: the ones who left Palestine and the ones who stayed under Israeli rule, but according to Camera d'Afflitto neither of the two fields produced remarkable works in the 1950's, because the Palestinian short story became well established at the beginning of the 1960's.[193]

In Lebanon Saᶜīd Taqiyy al-Dīn (1904-60) was the most active romantic short story writer who, as his predecessor Khalīl Taqiyy al-Dīn, also dealt with the theme of the bond between Lebanese migrants and Lebanon, adding the element of the rupture of the bond as source of destruction and comparing the Druses' simple and ethically regimented lifestyle with the materialistic lifestyle migrants adopt. Widād Sakākīnī (1913-86) was the first Lebanese woman to publish a short story collection (*Marāyā al-Nās*, People's Mirrors) in 1945, although she had started publishing single short stories in magazines in 1941, and Yumnā al-ᶜĪd considers her a writer that helped: a) the transition of the

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[191] Ḥadīdī's observation about al-Idilbī are in ᶜĀshūr, Ghazūl, Rashīd [et al.] (eds.). *Op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 192-3. She is included among the romantic writers in Hafez. 'The Modern Arabic Short Story' in Badawi (ed.). *Op. cit.*, p. 295.

[192] See Yāghī. *Op. cit.*, pp. 68-9, 73 and also Salma Khadra Jayyusi (ed.). *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 24-7 for more details about Jabrā.

[193] For Camera d'Afflitto the only exception was ᶜAzzām, whom I have included among realists; see Isabella Camera d'Afflitto. 'Narrativa Palestinese Contemporanea: Note su Alcuni Autori', *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, 1, (1983), p. 70.

short story towards a literary form involving artificiality in the representation of reality; b) to ease the oratorical tone typical of the works of those years; c) to make the language more flexible and hence more in tune with the life she depicted; d) to reduce the importance of the ornate prose style.[194] Although Sakākīnī did not denounce openly the many social practices discriminating against women, Baldissera points out that her often subtly ironic descriptions of the negative and ridiculous aspects of feminine traditions and habits were an implicit criticism.[195]

d) The realistic short story

Realism, whose emergence is associated with the growth of the modernly educated bourgeoisie as reading public and as a new producer of literature, is a concept that includes multiple short story forms, whose variety and dynamism reflected the diversity and vitality of the Arab societies of the time. Realists tried to comprehend their realities, of whose complexity they were conscious, and conveyed in their works their own experiences of those realities, rather than showing the world objectively. At the end of the 1940's appeared the first symptoms of a trend within realism known in Arabic literature as socialist realism,[196] which coexisted with 'proper' realism, was very important in the Arabic literary scene of the 1950's and was a consequence of the generally euphoric political climate of the time, engendered by a) acquisitions of independence, b) regime changes; c) diffusion of Marxist ideology (with its local variants, such as the Baᶜthist one) and pan-arabist ideologies in the 1950's; d) the debate around commitment in literature, triggered by the translation of Sartre's *Qu'est ce que la littérature?* (What is literature?) in 1950. Socialist realism was characterised by attention towards the impoverished masses and the consideration and use of literature as an instrument, put in the hands of writers guided by the party and committed to the cause, to fight, to criticise what hinders society's development and to depict what is positive. No political event in the Middle

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[194] ᶜĀshūr, Ghazūl, Rashīd [et al.] (eds.). *Op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 49.
[195] Eros Baldissera. 'La Narrativa Femminile in Siria', *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, 2, (1984), p. 90.
[196] Hafez proposes the alternative nomenclature of socialist romanticism; see Hafez. *The Quest for Identities*, pp. 240-6.

East of the time escaped the pens of socialist realists, Syrians in particular, whose short stories treated the wars of independence, the Palestinian issue, etc. side by side with other themes, such as the relationship between East and West, Syrian usage and custom, social and familiar relations (sometimes analysing also the psychological aspects), class conflicts (with a predilection of the Marxian writers for describing working class' difficult lives), the problems intellectuals and artists faced, etc. Al-Kharrāṭ commented that only few of the socialist realist works were valuable, but most of them were still immature and tended to reduce human beings to basic positive, active and optimist models rather than presenting them as living creatures with disagreements, different qualities and talents. On the formal qualities of those works he added that most authors used dialects in dialogues and narration in general (because the dialect was considered 'the sacred symbol of the working people'), considered language just a tool and gave content absolute priority over form; often this generated works lacking coherence that were impoverished rather than enriched by artificious oral styles. On the other side there were also works written exclusively in classical Arabic, which nevertheless lacked sincerity because they reflected the jargon of the prevailing ideology.[197] The socialist realistic approach followed the same fate of the political enthusiasm of the 1950's, i.e. it began to fade away in the early 1960's, when a completely different kind of approach to reality and art prevailed. None of the sources consulted names socialist realists that have significantly contributed to the development of the short story, while they name several realists as important contributors to the genre between the 1930's and the 1950's and I shall concentrate my attention on them. Women writers' contribution within the realist trend in these decades is scarce, hence they will barely appear in the following few pages.

Lebanese Tawfīq Yūsuf ᶜAwwād (1911-89), who started publishing in the 1930's, treated the theme of migration like his predecessors, enlarging it to include internal migration towards the cities. He presented migration abroad as

[197] Idwār Al-Kharrāṭ. *Al-Qiṣṣah wa al-Ḥadāthah.* (Al-Qāhirah: Markaz al-Ḥaḍārah al-ᶜArabiyyah, 2002), pp. 8-11; quote on p. 11.

a calamity and often idealised Lebanon's people and nature; at the same time he realistically depicted urban Lebanon and exposed the hypocrisy of religious and administrative authorities, showing an ability to investigate and express the complexity of reality with a sophistication that his predecessors did not possess. His characters are mainly drawn from the lower and middle classes, often in difficult situations and described with empathy and attention to their psychological lives. Such characterisation, combined with coherent structure, economic language, engaging action, succeeded in creating stories that were artistically mature and still appreciated by common readers.

Sa^{c}īd Ḥūrāniyyah (1929-94) was one of the many Syrian realistic short story writers that appeared in the 1950's in the enthusiastic atmosphere triggered by independence. His first collection distanced itself from the romantic-tinged patriotism of his predecessors and set the example of the romanticism-free patriotism that became rife among his contemporaries. His main themes were intergenerational conflict, social justice, the Palestinian situation, Syria's fight for freedom. He contributed to the stylistic development of the short story by introducing a new descriptive strategy and a sophisticated technique that Hafez calls 'the dialectics of parallel structures in the development of the action'.[198] In his new strategy poetic, unromantic and unsentimental, descriptions of the locales transform locales into sources of meaning that enlighten the relationships between characters and nature. The parallel structures are two plots that interact while they unfold concomitantly and by so doing they enrich each other and the story's meaning, because realistic details are symbols that carry various meanings.

The major representatives of Palestinian realism were Imīl Ḥabībī (1922-96) within Palestine, Samīrah ^{c}Azzām (1927-67) and Ghassān Kanafānī (1936-72) in the diaspora, who published their short stories in the 1950-60's period. Ḥabībī's short stories focus on themes such as the inhumane difficulties and treatments borne by Palestinians who refused to leave, their inertia in front of Zionists, the return of the ones who left, etc., presented with

[198] Hafez. 'The Modern Arabic Short Story' in Badawi (ed.). *Op. cit.*, p. 313.

traditional narrative styles, such as the same narrator recurring in all stories of the same collection, and a certain symbolism.[199] Kanafānī wrote short stories that conveyed the experience of exile of various generations of common Palestinians. He used a polyphonic language and innovative experimental narrative strategies, such as that of gathering in the same collection short stories that all share the same focal idea, all elements that make of him 'the most gifted Palestinian short-story writer'.[200] Samīrah ᶜAzzām published her first collection *Ashyā' Ṣaghīrah* (Little Things) in 1954, followed by other four collections during the rest of the fifties and the sixties.[201] Her stories treat several social problems, such as the effects of conflict on individuals and families and women's emancipation, and are peopled with many kinds of human beings: common Palestinians of different ages with their daily worries and experiences of social, economic, and national subjugation; non-Palestinians; predominant female characters of all sorts, since ᶜAfīf Farrāj underlines how ᶜAzzām does not limit herself to one female stereotype.[202] Nevertheless her characters all face aggression and brutality, which contributes to create the atmosphere of pessimism that wraps her stories. While Raḍwā ᶜĀshūr, considering all the above, sees ᶜAzzām as a pioneer of the realistic short story, Hafez instead considers ᶜAzzām 'the leading woman writer of this romantic trend' because of her self-destructive and unrealistic male characters and her naïve, vulnerable, idealistic female characters, who are isolated within a context of social decadence and male manipulation that they cannot accept or alter.[203] Yāghī instead considers ᶜAzzām's short stories

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[199] For more details on Ḥabībī's short stories see Camera d'Afflitto 'Narrativa Palestinese Contemporanea', pp. 73-81; Anwar Badr. "Imīl Ḥabībī Ru'yah Naqdiyyah li-l-Aᶜmāl al-Ūlā". WWW document, URL: http://www.sis.gov.ps/arabic/roya/11/page12.html, retrieved on 08/01/2008.

[200] For quote and more information see Hafez. 'The Modern Arabic Short Story' in Badawi (ed.). *Op. cit.*, p. pp. 313-4.

[201] The fifth was posthumous.

[202] ᶜAfīf Farrāj. *Al-Ḥurriyyah fī Adab al-Mar'ah*. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fārābī, 1975), pp. 131-46 devotes a whole chapter to ᶜAzzām.

[203] ᶜĀshūr, Ghazūl, Rashīd [et al.] (eds.). *Op. cit.*, vol.3, p. 141; Hafez. 'The Modern Arabic Short Story' in Badawi (ed.). *Op. cit.*, pp. 296-7. Also Jayyusi considers her view of experience realistic and her style free of sentimentalism in Jayyusi (ed.). *Op. cit.*, p. 26. ᶜAzzām is called 'a master stylist in the use of realism and naturalism' in Evelyne Accad and Rose Ghurayyib. *Contemporary Women Writers and Poets*. (Beirut: Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Beirut University College, 1985), p. 42.

endowed with a romantic artistic structure and a subject matter derived from reality.[204]

Egyptian female realists presented various positive and negative types of women in their works, paid extreme attention to social and familiar relationships and treated fundamental issues, such as women's management of the freedom bestowed upon them in modern times, the double standards applied to both sexes, the contrasts between new and old values, the gap existing between the theoretical side of the modern discourse and its practical application, with the last two elements causing women to live those same contrasts in the relationships with themselves and with others. Egyptian realism was dominated by Yūsuf Idrīs (1927-91), who started publishing in the 1950's and for many years overshadowed his Egyptian colleagues first with his realist oeuvre, characterised by feelings of frustration, oppression and failure, and then with his modernist one, in which the frustration and loneliness of the previous period are accompanied by the absurd and much formal experimentation.[205]

e) The beginnings of the modernist short story

The 1940's witnessed the appearance of the first examples of modernist short stories beside the realist ones in Egypt and the foundation of several magazines, such as *al-Taṭawwur*, *al-Bashīr* and *al-Kātib al-Miṣrī*, which all called for artistic and intellectual innovation, publishing the innovative works of young writers, who were much influenced by modern European culture and arts, such as Bishr Fāris (1907-1963), ᶜĀdil Kāmil (1916-?), Fatḥī Ghānim (1927-99). Although Fāris was the only one of the group to have published a collection in the 1940's,[206] and despite their minor popularity when compared to the realistic writers of that decade, those writers marked the beginning of the transition towards modernism, which was going to take several years, and

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[204] Yāghī. *Op. cit.*, pp. 99-100.

[205] Among the many works written on Idrīs see Roger Allen (ed.). *Critical Perspectives on Yusuf Idris*. (Colorado Springs: Three Continents Press, 1994); Hafez. *The Quest for Identities*, pp. 145-72.

[206] *Sū' Tafāhum* (Misunderstanding), published in 1942; Kāmil and Ghānim published in magazines.

played an important role in the development of the short story because they introduced elements that were later developed by the following generation of writers, such as symbolism (Ghānim also surrealism), contradiction between visions of the same action/situation/character or levels of experience, and hence the theme of relativity of truth; combination of reality and illusion levels; innovative language, narrative structures and techniques, such as stream of consciousness and interior monologue.[207] These innovations were part of a deep schism that affected the literary field in its foundations: writers grew dissatisfied with the principle of objective representation of external reality, and turned towards subjective representation of interior reality; the aforesaid modern techniques drew attention towards the autonomy of the fictional work rather than towards the autonomy of the author as realism did; the writer became an isolated figure, marginalised by the literary establishment and ignored by the wider reading public because of experimentation.

The transition towards modernism was continued in the 1950's by Yūsuf al-Shārūnī (1924) and Idwār al-Kharrāṭ (1926), who both started publishing collections in that decade, building upon the achievements of the modernist pioneers to develop their own technical and thematic endeavours, which later became the starting point of the following generation. Both authors shared some themes that were typical of modernism, such as characters' permanent isolation and withdrawal from external reality and fear as existential condition; they both contributed to the development of the vision of the world as nightmare, but while al-Shārūnī's nightmares were somewhat illusory and unnatural, al-Kharrāṭ's were more plausible.

They innovated narrative techniques: al-Shārūnī with his 'duality of perspective', which could be briefly summoned up as the construction in the story of two visions/levels of reality, and which al-Shārūnī particularly used when treating the theme of the relativity of truth; al-Kharrāṭ with his interior monologue, in which he endeavoured to eliminate completely authorial interference in the train of thoughts of his heroes, rather than performing an authorial reporting of those thoughts. Although he failed in his attempt, he nevertheless introduced the technique of rendering that was then developed

[207] For details on those writers' art see Hafez. *The Quest for Identities*, pp. 272-86.

by the sixties generation and began the shift from reporting to rendering.[208] Although al-Shārūnī and al-Kharrāṭ received more attention than the modernist pioneers and although the effervescent cultural atmosphere of 1950's Egypt and the more sophisticated literary taste of the reading public allowed the publication of modernist short stories beside realist ones, the 1950's remained the decade of romanticism, realism and socialist realism all over the Middle East. It was a decade of great enthusiasm and expectations, triggered by the newly acquired independence of several Arab countries[209] and fundamental political events such as the Free Officers' Revolution in Egypt (1952) and pan-Arab unity attempts (1958), but they were short-lived.

f) The sixties generation

The enthusiastic atmosphere of the 1950's was soon replaced by an endemic political persecution that took hold of the whole Middle East in the 1960's and a series of political disasters starting with the *Naksah* in 1968. Al-Kharrāṭ points out that the many negative political events of the 1970's, e.g. the Lebanese civil war, various attempts to expel Palestinians fighters from Lebanon, massacres of Palestinians, disagreements and conflicts among Arab states, swept away the idea that literature could and should be verisimilar and affect reality, which derived from the belief in the existence of a reciprocal relation between literature and reality, and violently shattered the idea of a national and social coherent reality. In such a context literature stopped being a way to imitate or reprocess or reformulate the existing and familiar models to acquire the features typical of modernist literature: opaqueness instead of harmony, questioning rather than answering, search for the unknown rather than satisfaction with the familiar.[210] One of the first communal efforts of modernists was the foundation in Egypt of the magazine *Gallery 68* (1968-71), under the direction of al-Kharrāṭ, whose contributors became known as the 'sixties generation', a definition that was later used for all modernists. Their works were characterised by some elements already present in the 1950's

[208] For a detailed treatment of those two writers' achievements see *Ibid.* pp. 288-314.
[209] Most countries acquired independence in 1946-56.
[210] See al-Kharrāṭ. *Op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

works and by their own original contributions: a strong criticism of the political and literary establishments, for which objectification they had to find new and sophisticated narrative forms that could escape censorship; contemporaneous withdrawal from external reality and from the self, the former being cruel and impossible to change, the latter being 'a prison', which cause isolation, alienation and despair; recoiling into the self; constant state of uncertainty and self-doubt, linked to the blurring of all standards to evaluate human acts; meaninglessness of an existence that is nearly a vegetative state as remote as possible from the detested world to which the anti-hero is chained. They aimed at: a) conveying the new condition of the modern man and the 'otherness' of the modern world, using literary techniques that could pierce through the protection of habit and induce readers to see through new lenses; b) creating a new artistic reality composed of subjective and objective elements, not completely divorced from exterior reality, nor identical to it; c) foregrounding the individual's impressions of external reality rather than reality itself, which made reality a projection of a character's psyche. To accomplish their ambitious intents they had to develop new narrative techniques, e.g.: the use of subjective time rather than metric time, which allowed to expand or shrink the duration and to distort the chronological succession; the creation of causal connections, not always and not strictly speaking logic, among images and times that interrelate them despite their apparent incoherence; the use of interior monologue to convey characters' reflections upon life experiences and of mirroring to make the hero mirror external reality; preference of intuitive knowledge, through dreams, visions, feelings, over rational knowledge. Some of the themes of the short stories of that decade were: a generalised, unfathomable, omnipresent fear that infiltrated all aspects of the characters' lives, causing frustration and a sense of impotence that then generated the individual's idleness in front of society despite his dissatisfaction with it; the violence that permeated the world of the characters; nightmares become a permanent feature of human existence.[211]

As it will become apparent in the overview of Levantine countries, in the 1960's appeared numerous talented female short story writers, who

[211] See Hafez. *The Quest for Identities*, pp. 320-32 for a full exposition of modernist features.

contributed to the development of the genre, although not all of them embraced modernism.

Among the several modernist Syrian male short story writers are Zakariyyā Tāmir (1931), whose short stories are dominated by biting sarcasm, detachment, the absurd, a structure and lyrical language typical of poetry rather than prose; Jūrj Sālim (1933-76), whose short stories are characterised by anguish, characters who live in complete uncertainty and bewilderment in front of an unfathomable existence and who are saved only by death.[212] In the 1960's several gifted women writers started publishing collections, among whom Nādiyā Khūst[213] and Ghādah al-Sammān (1942), who with their modernist narrative techniques took the distance from the traditionalist and static techniques employed by romantic writers such as al-Idilbī, still active in the sixties and in the following three decades. Al-Sammān's extremely prolific production has a remarkable thematic breadth: her collections in the 1960's focused mainly on masculinist oppression and from the 1970's onwards also on the Palestinian issue, the Lebanese civil war, in which she lived for several years, the Arab nationalist fight against European and Zionist imperialism, generalised social injustice in the Middle East, the power games of Arab governments and middle classes, etc. The development of her art can be seen in her female characters' evolution. In her first collections they unsuccessfully seek self-realisation, finding refuge from their frustration in mental illnesses and perversions. In the middle ones they rebel against social and moral hypocrisy. In the latest ones they refuse the roles of slaves or sexual preys which parents or husbands assign to them. Her style, although it remains highly symbolic, constantly shifts from being poetic and suggestive to being irrational and surrealistic.[214]

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[212] See Camera d'Afflitto. *Letteratura Araba Contemporanea,* pp. 267-9 for Syrian modernists; for Tāmir see the six monographic articles contained in the Arab Writers Union's journal *al-Mawqif al-Adabī* no. 352 (August 2000).

[213] See chapter two below.

[214] A list of the many works written by and about her can be found on her personal page on the Arab Writers Union's website: http://www.awu-dam.org/dalil/10sen/dlil044.htm.

Laylā Baᶜlabakkī (1936) introduced modernist techniques into Lebanese women short stories already in 1964 with her collection *Safīnat Ḥanān ilā al-Qamar* (Spaceship of Tenderness to the Moon), which was innovative in both its form and content: in the stories there is no psychological description of characters, nor plot, and time seems to be frozen; they are monologues of women who talk frankly about their feelings and thoughts towards men with whom they have marriage or love or friendship relationships, revealing atypical, varied and rich nuances of intersexual love. During the 1970's modernism gained momentum among women short story writers, although not all of them embraced it, and during the civil war (1975-90) their production outnumbered that of male writers. In fact two major male writers of the time Ḥalīm Barakāt (1936) and Ilyās Khūrī (1948) only wrote one collection each, with Khūrī producing modernist stories par excellence because they were metafictional and tried to involve the reader in the making of the text, while expressing the anguish of the war and social and personal fragmentation.[215] The war became a prominent element in short stories written in this period by women writers, such as Emily Naṣr Allāh (1938) and Rafīf Fattūḥ (1954), who explored the consequences war was having on Lebanese society and women in particular, but while the latter experimented with a modernist narrative structure and with a suggestive concise language, the former preferred metric time and other features of more traditional writing modes.[216] The Lebanese modernist short story reached its maturity in the 1980-90's with Hādiyā Saᶜīd; Hudā Barakāt (1952), who in *Zā'irāt* (Female Visitors) describes with black humour the routine and monotony of her female protagonists' lives, which seem all identical in their repetitiveness; Ḥanān al-Shaykh (1945), who instead creates in *Aknusu al-Shams ᶜan al-Suṭūḥ* (I Sweep the Sun off Roofs) several

[215] Being Barakāt and Khūrī mainly novelists, information about their short stories is scarce. See: Evelyne Accad, *Sexuality and War: Literary Masks of the Middle East.* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), pp. 111-59; http://www.halimbarakat.com.

[216] For more details on both writers see Fadia Suyoufie. 'Mnemonic Modes in Emily Naṣrallah's *A House not of her Own (Bayt Laisa Lahā)*', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 37:3, (2006), pp. 416-52; ᶜĀshūr, Ghazūl, Rashīd [et al.] (eds.). *Op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 51;

very diverse female characters with extremely different lives, identities and ways of relating themselves to their realities and men.[217]

In the 1970's beside the already existing loci of production of Palestinian literature (Israel and the diaspora) appeared also the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which after 1967 became known as the Occupied Territories, where the short story became quickly a favourite literary genre. In her study on the literature of the Occupied Territories,[218] Camera d'Afflitto underlines how differences in language, tone and themes emerge among diasporic literature and the one produced by literati that in some way must cohabit with Israeli Jews. In the literature of the latter group the influence of Hebrew is palpable because of the Hebrew military and administrative jargon and the Arabised Hebrew words that have been introduced in the vernacular. Although estrangement and anguish are recurring on both fronts, diaspora writers express a natural feeling of estrangement and anguish caused by exile, accompanied always by the hope to return.

Palestinian writers living in Israel or in the Occupied Territories instead write of feelings of estrangement within their own country, because they are second-class citizens and live in constant fear of new Jewish settlements and they have no hope to return, but only the anguish of a daily life steeped in oppression, humiliation, unemployment, compromise, violence, which become the themes of many short stories written in the Occupied Territories and in Israel. Some short story writers of the Occupied Territories are Jamāl Bannūrah, who started writing in the middle 1960's; Gharīb ᶜAsqalānī (1948) and Bāsimah Murtaḍā Ḥalāwah (1949-79), who started writing in the 1970's; Liyānah Badr, who started writing in the 1980's. Bannūrah, who also treats social issues such as the position of women within Palestinian society and intergenerational conflicts, has a more traditional approach to the short story and tends to write lengthy texts; Ḥalāwah, one of the few women writers of the Occupied Territories, interconnects the aforesaid themes with feminist issues

[217] For more details on Barakāt, al-Shaykh and other modernist writers see *Ibid.* pp. 52-5; on Saᶜīd see chapter two below.
[218] Isabella Camera d'Afflitto. 'Sulla Narrativa dei Territori Occupati (*al-Ḍiffah wa al-Qiṭāᶜ*)', *Oriente Moderno,* 66:7-9 (July-September 1986), pp. 119-68.

in a very concise style, which shares with ᶜAsqalānī and other writers a frequent use of symbolism, surrealism and sarcasm.[219]

According to Nabīh al-Qāsim realism is the main tendency among short stories writers of Israel, in which optimism and faith in the future triumph, like in Muḥammad Naffāᶜ's production (1940). At the beginning of the 1960's he started publishing short stories characterised by simplicity, avoidance of any opaqueness on the linguistic and stylistic levels, dialogues written in vernacular, characters taken from the lower strata of Palestinian society.[220] Also short stories by women in the 1950-60's were predominantly realist, focussing on social issues and particularly women's problems and realities, but in the texts of the 1970-90's, the writers, despite keeping the same focus of the previous generation, use more varied narrative tools to create multilayered texts that run at a much faster pace.

In Egypt among the many talented male modernists there were: Bahā' Ṭāhir (1935), who completed the shift from reporting techniques to rendering ones that al-Kharrāṭ had started in the 1950's and avoided emotive language and sentimentality; ᶜAbd al-Ḥakīm Qāsim (1935-90), who developed a technique in which he articulated the main plot of a short story into several interdependent sub-plots that corresponded to several dimensions of reality and several levels of meaning, which was a way to underline the relativity of truth; Jamāl al-Ghītānī (1945), who developed a technique to distance the author and the reader from the treated issues/situations by mirroring the present in the past or the future.[221] Women writers in the 1960-70's did not employ modernist techniques and their writings were still anchored in an external one-dimensional reality, but it is possible to distinguish between: a) those who were still attached to romanticism, such as Ṣūfī ᶜAbd Allah, and

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[219] For more details on short story writers of the Occupied Territories see *Ibid;* on ᶜAsqalānī see also ᶜĀdil al-Usṭah, (01/11/2007): «Qirā'ah fī Qiṣṣat Gharīb ᶜAsqalānī "al-Jūᶜ"». WWW document, URL: http://www.diwanalarab.com/spip.php?article10970, retrieved on 09/01/2008; on Badr see chapter two.

[220] For more details on Naffāᶜ see Yāghī. *Op. cit.*, pp. 239-54, who quotes al-Qāsim on p. 242.

[221] See Hafez. *The Quest for Identities*, pp. 332-45 for extensive details about several sixties authors; on Ṭāhir see also Sophie Bennett. 'Transcendence and Immanence: Self and Other in Bahā' Ṭāhir's Short Stories', *Arabic & Middle Eastern Literatures*, 1:1, (January 1998), pp. 75-85.

realism, such as Iḥsān Kamāl (1935), the latter explicitly rejecting experimental forms in favour of traditional ones and constructing her stories' protagonists mainly as lower class, uneducated, subjugated women whose familiar, social and interior dilemmas she analyses;[222] b) those who outgrew romanticism and realism because they explored also the psychological lives of their characters, such as Iqbāl Barakah (1942), who treated mainly the new issues urban modern Egyptian bourgeois women faced, their demand for freedom and equality and the complex familiar and social relations they entertained because of the various new roles they performed outside the domestic sphere. To this second group belonged also Alīfah Rifᶜat (1930-95), who returned to publishing in the 1970's after a long pause, who described the many forms of oppression women endured in rural Egypt, which she attributed to men's obliteration of women's Qur'anic rights, whose reinstatement, together with the revitalisation of Islam, she presented as a hope to improve women's lives. Her rural narrative world was not a serene haven but a secretive world whose taboos, and particularly the sexual one, Rifᶜat exposed with frankness.[223]

In the 1980's, instead, started appearing short stories by women writers which exuded political engagement, fight for women's political rights, formal experimentation, new styles of writing and new narrative structures. The first collection of Laṭīfah al-Zayyāt (1923-96) was accompanied by the first collections of several younger writers: Iᶜtidāl ᶜUthmān (1942), Ibtihāl Sālim (1949), Salwā Bakr (1949) and others. Al-Zayyāt's "Al-Shaykhūkhah",[224] presents formal and thematic innovations: fusion of several genres, such as diary, memoirs and short story; narration done by the same narrator, but from two perspectives; the protagonist/narrator is presented through her own vision of herself and others' visions of her, which all change through time; old age is

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[222] For more details on Kamāl, who continued publishing until the 1980's, see Sayyid Ḥāmid al-Nassāj. *Aṣwāt fī al-Qiṣṣah al-Qaṣīrah al-Miṣriyyah.* (Al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Maᶜārif, 1994), pp. 351-7.

[223] For more on Rifᶜat see Cooke. *Op. cit.*, p. 458; Nadje Sadig al-Ali. *Gender Writing/Writing Gender: The Representation of Women in a Selection of Modern Egyptian Literature.* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1994), pp. 37-51.

[224] From her first collection *Al-Shaykhūkhah wa Qiṣaṣ Ukhrā.* (Al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Mustaqbal al-ᶜArabī, 1986). More details on this collection can be found in ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Abū ᶜAwf. *Qirā'ah fī al-Kitābah al-Unthawiyyah: al-Riwāyah.. wa al-Qiṣṣah al-Qaṣīrah al-Miṣriyyah.* ([Cairo?]: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-ᶜĀmmah li-l-Kitāb, 2001), pp. 121-5.

presented not as an age of respected wisdom but as a torment that affects the narrator's relationship with herself and others' relationships with her.

Also ᶜUthmān's intent was to break with well-rooted and well-used literary forms to present short stories that mix prose and poetry, resort to symbols and Sufis' language and imagery, and interlace mythological time with the present, giving a prime role to imagination. Also Sālim uses symbols and a mixture of poetic language and an extremely realistic language, accompanied by characters mostly drawn from the lowest strata of urban and rural Egyptian society. She shares with Bakr a non-romantic depiction of characters that are not all desperate and destitute and speak their own experiences of the many social and political changes and issues of their time. Bakr is particularly skilled in creating female characters that, despite their low social place, are endowed with a considerable experience and with a good nature that provide them with the strength and the consciousness they need to face their hard lives and to avoid the moral corruption and hypocrisy widespread particularly among the middle classes.[225]

The 1990's witnessed the appearance of many younger women writers, more confident than their predecessors in the use of literary techniques, who therefore experiment with forms and contents, overcome the separation among genres and the use of mythological and folkloric symbols, utilise more their intellectual heritage, and involve readers in the making of texts, which sometimes become metafictional. The omniscient implicit narrator with its pretence of objectivity and authority that could be found in realistic texts is replaced by a 'neutral' narrator that instead is steeped in its subjectivity without such pretences. The nineties writers, such as Mayy al-Tilmisānī (1965), Amīnah Zaydān (1966) and Nūrā Amīn, introduce into literature women's daily lives and their minute, apparently insignificant, details.[226] Their predecessors

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[225] For more details about these three writers see ᶜĀshūr, Ghazūl, Rashīd [et al.] (eds.). *Op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 35-40; Abū ᶜAwf. *Op. cit.*, pp. 129-43; Rasheed el-Enany. 'The Madness of Non-Conformity: Woman versus Society in the Fiction of Salwā Bakr', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 37:3, (2006), pp. 376-415; Caroline Seymour-Jorn. 'Etidal Osman: Egyptian Women's Writing and Creativity', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 2:1, (Winter 2006), pp. 95-121. Other sources on Bakr are listed in the bibliography.

[226] On al-Tilmisānī see Bahā' Ṭāhir (2001): "Tawāṣul al-Ajyāl fī al-Adab al-Miṣrī al-Ḥadīth: Mayy al-Tilmisānī ka-Namūdhaj". WWW document, URL:

had often neglected those details to devote their texts to great political and social causes, because many of them were heavily involved in political activities and experienced personally many events that for the nineties generation were part of Egypt's past. In their texts nationalist cause and intellectuals' political commitment have been replaced by search for identity and belonging against estrangement and decentredness and questioning of prevailing values, moral norms and dualisms, such as female/male, subjective/objective, personal/political.

2.2. Iraq and the Gulf

The Gulf and Maghreb sections are structured differently from the previous one: due to the differences between the phases of development of the short story in the countries belonging to these two areas, each country's development process is analysed separately and diachronically.

a) Iraq

The rupture with the past seen in the Levant happened also in Iraq in the first decade of the 20th century, when a group of young writers, publishing mainly in the magazine *Tanwīr al-Afkār* (1909-21), broke with tradition using the dream or vision as a narrative form. Those dreams' contents were far from imaginary though: the dream form was simultaneously a protection from censorship, while treating contemporary nationalistic and social issues with a strong didactic and moralistic message, and a way to accustom Iraqi readers with narrative through a familiar element rather than through the adoption of unknown narrative forms. ᶜAṭā' Amīn (1897-2003) stood out in this group because of the more mature way in which he used narrative techniques and developed the plot and because of the simpler, less ornate language he used.

In the second and third decades of the 20th century the Iraqi political and intellectual climate, like the Levantine, was characterised by turbulence,

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http://www.nizwa.com/volume29/p243_246.html, retrieved on 05/01/2008; on Zaydān see Abū ᶜAwf. *Op. cit.*, pp. 153-65; on Amīn see chapter two.

evolution and the influence of *al-Madrasah al-Ḥadīthah.* This was the background of Maḥmūd Aḥmad al-Sayyid (1901-37), considered the founder of Iraqi narrative, who was influenced by the realism of the Russian masters and the Taymūr brothers and by the libertarian aspirations of modern Ottoman/Turkish literature in his project to create an exemplary Iraqi realistic narrative that could direct social and political reforms and inspire other writers. In fact, although there is a substantial qualitative difference between his early 1920's romantic short stories and his late 1920-1930's realistic ones, he became very popular and influential among his contemporaries, thanks to his verisimilar characters and situations, little didacticism and attentive characterisation.[227]

The 1930's witnessed the first attempts of Iraqi women at short story writing, but they were so preachy and written in such an oratorical tone that some critics do not even consider them short stories.[228] More successful were Dhū'l-Nūn Ayyūb (1908-88) and ᶜAbd al-Ḥaqq Fāḍil (1910/15), who were influenced by Russian literature and Taymūr, as it can be deduced from the long introductions to their collections and the continuous authorial intrusions typical of Ayyūb's stories. They both treated similar political and social issues, such as nepotism, corruption, marginalisation and exploitation of peasants and women, etc., but while Ayyūb's treatment was extremely polemical, Fāḍil's was humorous and satiric, although accompanied by a pessimist undercurrent. Moreover Ayyūb's characterisation was very weak, while Fāḍil created coherent characters, convincing plots and well-managed dialogues.

In the 1940's Ayyūb fell under the spell of Egyptian romantics, but kept social criticism as main focus, adding political issues, such as British imperialism.[229] Romantic women writers in the 1950-60's concentrated much on marital relationships, providing many examples of disharmony, betrayal, tragic endings, suffering women sacrificing their respectability and health for their loved ones, and very scarce examples of happy marriages. Another

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[227] For details see Vincenzo Strika. 'Caratteri e Figure della Narrativa Irachena Contemporanea', *in Atti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei: Rendiconti della Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche*, 7-12, (1979), pp. 360-2.
[228] See ᶜĀshūr, Ghazūl, Rashīd [et al.] (eds.). *Op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 20-1 for details.
[229] For details on Ayyūb see Hafez. 'The Modern Arabic Short Story' in Badawi (ed.). *Op. cit.*, pp. 288-9, 297-8; on Fāḍil see Strika. *Op. cit.*, pp. 363-8.

common theme was the comparison between westernised bourgeois women and 'pure Iraqi' working class women, with the authors siding with the latter. Firyāl Ghazūl finds in those works a sociological value rather than an artistic one, with little distinction among the different writers.[230]

ᶜAbd al-Malik Nūrī's (1921-2007) literary output was fundamental in the evolution of the realistic Iraqi short story, as proved by the celebrated prize of the Lebanese magazine *Al-Adīb* he was awarded in the 1940's, although he had stopped writing by the end of the 1950's. Although Nūrī treated the same themes of other realists, such as social inequality, alienation and spousal incompatibility, his experimental narrative techniques distinguish him from them: he used polyphonic language, interior monologue and stream of consciousness to create convincing characters and reveal their inner lives; he built a mature narrative structure, used montage and pioneered in Iraq a particular use of time that influenced Fuᶜād al-Takarlī (1927-2008).[231]

Al-Takarlī revealed himself as a major figure of Iraqi modernism already in the early 1950's, despite a generalised hostility of the public and the critics: he introduced psychoanalysis into Iraqi literature to delve into scabrous themes, such as incest, rape, adultery, accompanied by other themes, e.g. political repression, life's brutalities, social issues, etc.; among the several innovative narrative techniques he employed can be mentioned the presentation of each story through the perspective, voice and vision of a character.[232]

In the 1960's modernist narrative techniques appeared also in women's short stories, such as those written by Luṭfiyyah al-Dulaymī (1937) and Daisy al-Amīr among others, and by the 1970's the examples multiplied to include works by ᶜĀliyah Mamdūḥ (1944), Buthaynah al-Nāṣirī (1947) and many others. Dulaymī and al-Nāṣirī treat a wide range of topics in their stories, including historical, patriotic and nationalist ones, and not only those linked to

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[230] ᶜĀshūr, Ghazūl, Rashīd [et al.] (eds.). *Op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 21.

[231] For details see Strika. *Op. cit.*, pp. 373-6; Hafez. 'The Modern Arabic Short Story' in Badawi (ed.). *Op. cit.*, pp. 311-2.

[232] For details see Walther Wiebke. 'Distant Echoes of Love in the Narrative Work of Fu'ad al-Tikirli' in Roger Allen, Hilary Kilpatrick and Ed de Moor (eds.). *Love and Sexuality in Modern Arabic Literature.* (London: Saqi Books, 1995), pp. 131-139; 244-243; *idem.* 'Studies in Human Psyche and Human Behavior under Political and Social Pressure: The Recent Literary Works of Fu'ad Al-Takarli', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 19:4, (Fall 1997), pp. 21-36.

women. Their characters are varied and not only female: al-Nāṣirī prefers commoners, often simple people, but not deprived of autonomy and agency, Dulaymī's female characters can vary from illiterate peasants to educated working women. Like Mamdūḥ, al-Nāṣirī resorts to unexpected twists in the narrative to reveal what has been obliterated by daily foreseeable routine. Despite having published only two collections, Mamdūḥ's originality and audacity are proven by the deconstructed narrative structures and poetic prose laden with enigmatic meanings of her first collection and by the array of 'socially abnormal' female characters of her second.[233]

b) Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia the first attempts at writing short narratives came from reformist journalists, who in the 1930-40's published in magazines, e.g. *Ṣawt al-Ḥijāz* (founded in 1931) and *al-Manhal* (founded in 1936/7), texts that exposed issues such as widespread illiteracy, poverty and poor health. Those short narratives were deprived of the artistic features of short stories: some of them were written in the style of *maqāmāt*, others were essays of various kinds, all characterised by social criticism and satire of worn out traditions. Their authors were influenced by the realistic presentation of *al-Madrasah al-Ḥadīthah*, although they did not form a group and were deprived of the awareness of the short story specificities that their Egyptian counterparts showed. Among them stands out Aḥmad al-Sibāʿī (1905-83), who could produce a lively image of his contemporary reality and build accurate characters through the description of their environmental, social and psychological conditions, although his immature 'realism' was ruined by autobiographical elements and personal memories.[234]

The short narratives published in the 1950's were of two main kinds: the majority of them for al-Ḥāzimī were 'popular romantic', where popular refers to

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[233] For details on al-Amīr see chapter three; on the other writers see Nāzik al-Aʿrajī. 'Qiṣṣat al-Kātibah al-ʿIrāqiyyah: al-Na'y ʿan Munkhafaḍ al-Nisā'', *Al-Adāb*, 11-12, (November-December 1994), pp. 73-85.

[234] For details see Muʿjib bin Saʿīd al-Zahrānī. *Mawsūʿat al-Adab al-ʿArabī al-Suʿūdī al-Ḥadīth: Nuṣūṣ Mukhtārah wa Dirāsāt. Al-Mujallad al-Rābiʿ: al-Qiṣṣah al-Qaṣīrah.* (Al-Riyāḍ: Dār al-Mufradāt li-l-Nashr wa al-Tawzīʿ, 2001), pp. 21-3; Manṣūr al-Ḥāzimī. 'Al-Qiṣṣah al-Qaṣīrah fī al-Adab al-Suʿūdī al-Ḥadīth', *ʿĀlam al-Kutub*, 1:4, (February 1981), pp. 494-7.

an imaginative representation of reality based on surprise and to a nostalgic view of past glories, and romantic refers to the sadness and escapism pervading those works.[235] These narratives were closer to essays and vignettes than to short stories, with the sentimental elements stronger than the popular ones in some cases. A minority of works instead shared a realistic approach to the new Saudi reality that was forming in those years through an extremely rapid economic development that affected lifestyles, family and social structures, individual psychological conditions, etc. Among the writers that produced the second kind of narratives Ibrāhīm al-Nāṣir (1932) distinguishes himself for some stories of a certain maturity, although their artistic qualities fluctuate considerably; in his best texts he uses interior monologue to depict characters' sensations and positions in particular situations and resorts to symbolism too.[236]

Themes such as the conflict between the Bedouin lifestyle and the urban sedentary one, the inner conflicts lived by urbanised Bedouins, the dehumanising city, the divergence between the old and the new appearing in all fields, etc. were predominant in the stories of the 1950-60's. Some male and female writers also treated specific female issues, such as forced marriages, excessive age differences between spouses, unhappy marital lives, etc. One of them was Najāt al-Khayyāṭ (1944), who in her only collection *Makhāḍ al-Ṣamt* (The Labour of Silence) (1965/6), which was the first to be published by a Saudi woman, uses a poetic and pregnant language influenced by romantics, such as al-Manfalūṭī and Jubrān, and a rebellious, high tone which makes of her collection 'a scream', as al-Ṣammādī calls it, denouncing the misery of women's lives and showing female characters who break free of their misery.[237] Following al-Khayyāṭ's example, the other few women writers who published their short stories on magazines in the 1960's and first half of the 1970's were using their works as outcries over women's despicable

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[235] Al-Ḥāzimī. *Op. cit.*, p. 490.
[236] See *Ibid.* pp. 498-501 for details.
[237] Nasīm al-Ṣammādī. 'Dirāsah fī Adab al-Mar'ah al-Su^{c}ūdiyyah al-Qaṣaṣī', *^{c}Ālam al-Kutub*, 1:4, (February 1981), pp. 521-3. Ghāzī instead notices its calm tone and narration in Khālid Muḥammad Ghāzī. *Al-Qiṣṣah al-Qaṣīrah fī Adab al-Mar'ah al-Su^{c}ūdiyyah*. (Al-Qāhirah: Maktab al-Ayyām, 1994), pp. 49-50.

situations. Despite the different artistic levels, those writers were the first ones to be aware of the short story specificities and peculiarity as a genre.

In the 1970's appeared a new generation of writers that brought the Saudi short story in line with the modernist trend widespread in most Arab countries, utilising techniques belonging to various literary genres and arts. Among the male representatives of this generation are: Muḥammad ᶜAlwān (1947), who fused together the structures and the dense languages of *qaṣīdah* and short story to render a narrative world entrenched in sadness and pessimism that almost completely leaves out external reality to focus on internal reality and its emotions and visions; ᶜAbd Allah Bākhishwayn (1953), who wrote stories with such ordinary beginnings that seemed even trite and then developed into an illogical sequel of extremely bizarre events narrated in a matter of fact tone, as if they were just ordinary happenings, and with a language deprived of any literary appearance.[238]

Women writers became a substantial presence from the second half of the 1970's onwards[239] by publishing an increasing number of collections mainly focussed on women's issues. When compared to the works of the previous decade many of those works show an unfathomableness and willingness to experiment with new narrative techniques and forms that were absent before, as in the texts of Khayriyyah al-Saqqāf (1951), who favoured the interior monologue with which she renders the desires and fears of her characters and sums up the events of the stories through dramatic consequential fragments.[240] This experimental tendency is more evident in the works published after the middle 1980's, in which appear several new techniques: Sharīfah al-Shamlān (1947) uses cinematographic and dramatic techniques, such as montage, that give visual elements a fundamental role in

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[238] For details on ᶜAlwān and Bakhishwayn see al-Zahrānī. *Op. cit.*, pp. 50-2; 56-8.

[239] One of the reasons of such phenomenon is the institutionalisation of women's education, which started in 1960, that allowed women from any social background to acquire formal education, while previously only wealthy families could afford private education for their daughters. See Arebi. *Op. cit.*, pp. 32-4 for further details about the different educational patterns of the different generations of women writers.

[240] For details on al-Saqqāf see Rāshid ᶜĪsā. *Muᶜādalāt al-Qiṣṣah al-Nisā'iyyah al-Suᶜūdiyyah: Dirāsah Naqdiyyah wa Biblyūjrāfiyā wa Anmūdhaj.* (Al-Riyāḍ: Mu'assasah Iṣdārāt al-Nakhīl, 1994), pp. 65-70.

the production of meaning within her stories;[241] several writers use a mixture of realism sprinkled with absurd or bizarre elements, accompanied by a narrator completely detached from the female protagonist, that give their writings a light, gay and ironic flavour, as in the case of Badriyyah al-Bishr.[242]

The themes treated also expand to embrace all life experiences on the public (national and social) and personal (familial and individual) level: there are some writers who tend to focus mostly on the inner worlds and lives of their characters, analysing their emotions and inner struggles, which are prioritised over the analysis of their environments or time, such as Laṭīfah Sālim (1951), who often uses the interior monologue to render the dialogues her female characters, who live in constant tension and anguish, have with their selves.[243] Many other writers instead tend towards a critical representation of their realities in speedy evolution, as is the case with Fawziyyah al-Bakr (1958), who often presents characters negatively affected by modernization, which has uprooted them from their traditional dwelling places and habits. Other writers can move smoothly among themes, such as Umaymah al-Khamīs (1964), who in her stories can treat strictly individual issues, such as the psychological dramas born from failures, or familiar issues, such as the estrangement between spouses, or even international political issues such as the Palestinian one.[244] In general the heterosexual love relationship is no longer treated with complete seriousness or with romanticism, but with irony and its sexual side is now treated more frequently and with more frankness by several writers, such as al-Khamīs and al-Bishr, that have forsaken the rare veiled allusions used by their predecessors.

c) United Arab Emirates

The first examples of short stories did not appear in the United Arab Emirates before 1968, when ᶜAbd Allah Ṣaqr Aḥmad (1952), considered the first to try

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[241] See *Ibid.* pp. 75-8 and Ghāzī. *Op. cit.*, pp. 59-64 for details on al-Shamlān.
[242] See chapter three.
[243] These reflections refer particularly to one of her collections; see Ghāzī. *Op. cit.*, pp. 50-3 for details.
[244] For details about al-Bakr see *Ibid.* pp. 65-8; for al-Khamīs see ᶜIsā. *Op. cit.*, pp. 125-31.

his hand at the genre in the Emirates,[245] started publishing his works in magazines, such as *Majallat Akhbār Dubaī* (founded in 1966) and *al-Ahlī* (founded in 1970), which became pulpits for many other short story writers. Nevertheless the genre became established in the 1970's, when the country acquired independence (1971), higher education became widespread (modern schooling had already been introduced in the 1950's), and the country's isolation and backwardness were swept away by the start of a dazzling modernisation and urbanisation process.[246] It appears though that the very first collection of short stories ever published in the Emirates was not Aḥmad's, but belonged to Shaykhah Mubārak al-Nākhī (1952), who published *Al-Raḥīl* (The Departure) in 1970, while Aḥmad's *Al-Khashabah* (The Plank) was published in 1975.[247] Hence, contrarily to what happened in other Arab countries, where the first short story practitioners were only men and women followed several years/decades later, in the Emirates the appearance of the short story genre and of women practising it coincided. In *Al-Khashabah* are visible aspects of the first social and economic changes undergone by the country after independence in the early seventies; contrasting this image of progress, *Al-Raḥīl* mostly depicts female characters as marginalised, subjected, frustrated victims of a harsh and intransigent society that does not allow them any right to decide or choose anything about their own lives. Other writers, among whom ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad (1957), published in magazines during the 1970's stories in which they criticised the country's 'old' problems, such as forced marriages, and the new ones created by modernisation, such as the materialistic mentality; they used traditional narrative structures, tended towards a romantic approach that filled the stories with sadness, failures and regret, and were didactic to the point of addressing readers directly.

In the 1980's the return of many Emirati newly graduates from abroad and the proliferation of cultural activities according to Rāshid induced a

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[245] ᶜAlī Muḥammad Rāshid. 'Al-Qiṣṣah al-Qaṣīrah fī Dawlat al-Imārāt al-ᶜArabiyyah al-Muttaḥidah', *Al-Bayān*, 277, (April 1989), p. 27.

[246] Rāshid lists other factors that helped the genre's establishment and explains the genre's late appearance in *Ibid.* pp. 18-26.

[247] Rāshid maintains that *Al-Khashabah* was the first collection to be published (*Ibid.* p. 27); Ṣabrī instead maintains that it was *Al-Raḥīl* (Ṣabrī. *Op. cit.*, pp. 37, 50). More details about *Al-Raḥīl* can be found in Aḥmad Ḥusayn Ḥumaydān. 'Mubtada' al-Qiṣṣah al-Imārātiyyah.. Shaykhah al-Nākhī Shāhidat Marḥalah', *Al-Bayān*, 446, (September 2007), pp. 66-73.

profound evolution of the Emirati short story,[248] which overcame the initial inadequacies, left traditionalism behind, explored new paths (among which realism) and was consecrated a main genre in Emirati literature.[249] In those years appeared several writers, such as Maryam Jumᶜah Faraj (1956), Ẓabiyyah Khamīs (1958), Muḥammad al-Murr (1955/60), Asmā' al-Zarᶜūnī (1961) and Salmā Maṭar Sayf,[250] who were fully aware of both the negative aspects of accelerated modernisation and the issues that existed in pre-oil Emirati society, such as women's subjection and marginalisation, which seem unaffected by oil economy. Some of their works contained comparisons between past and present and nostalgia of the past, whose major symbols (the palm, the sea and the desert) became their stability points in front of the ever-changing present.

In the writings published from the 1980's onwards Abū Shuᶜayr has noticed one main trend, which he calls 'magical Gulf realism', which has been influenced by Latin American magical realism, present in Arabic literatures since the 1970's. He considers ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad and Salmā Maṭar Sayf the best representatives of this trend, which fuses together western-born tendencies, with which young writers are familiar through their extensive reading of western literary works, with Arab literary, folkloric and mythical heritage. Gail Ramsey points out how in the works belonging to this trend the global and the local coexist: the former is perceivable in the presentation of urban locales and lifestyles that makes modern Emirati cities and their inhabitants indistinguishable from any other modern city setting and dweller in the world; the latter instead is perceivable in the supernatural creatures and bizarre events that people these short stories, which seem to have come out of the stories of *Alf Laylah wa Laylah* or Arab mythology.[251]

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[248] Rāshid. *Op. cit.*, pp. 27-33.

[249] This would seem to confirm Pratt's idea that 'the short story cycle rather than the novel might be chosen to portray [..] traditional societies disintegrating in the face of modernization' because of its 'loose' form. See Pratt. *Op. cit.*, p. 188.

[250] For Faraj and al-Murr see two articles (dated 25/11/2006, withouth author's name) posted on the website of *Dīwān al-ᶜArab*: http://www.diwanalarab.com/spip.php?article6780 and http://www.diwanalarab.com/spip.php?article6777. See chapter three for Sayf.

[251] Gail Ramsay. 'Global Heroes and Local Characters in Short Stories from the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman', *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 9:2, (August 2006), pp. 211-6. Abū Shuᶜayr's considerations are quoted in this article.

Beside magical realism Ramsay finds also a realistic style diffused among women short story writers, such as al-Zarᶜūnī, who populate their stories with extremely wealthy but despondent characters whose isolation, stress and disorientation are ascribed to the advent of oil economy.[252] Those writers focus mainly on the negative impact oil has had on Emirati patriarchal society and extended family, which have been transformed respectively into a neopatriarchal,[253] consumer society and a nuclear family, affected by isolation of women and elders, stress and incommunicability among family members, 'cultural schizophrenia'[254] engendered by the tense coexistence of latent, pre-oil norms and manifest modernised structures. Al-Zarᶜūnī's stories, among others, are peopled with female characters that have not evolved much according to Ṣabrī when compared to the subjected, marginalised and frustrated female characters of the early works, despite the 25 years passed between al-Nākhī's first collection and al-Zarᶜūnī's.[255]

Ṣabrī finds important differences between the aforesaid female writers and the younger ones who started publishing after 2000, so much that he calls the latter's short stories 'the story of the individual and of the self'[256] to signify their tendency to deal with the quest for the self, the conflict between the 'I' and the Other and other issues deriving from westernisation. Their urban settings apparently are fully globalised, deprived of any local element and of the symbols of the past previous writers used. Among these writers, Fāṭimah al-Mazrūᶜī (1978) tends to describe the modern city as a place of desolation and darkness, in which human beings meet only alienation and anxiety; hence they prefer to flee their environment to recoil into their selves, searching for hope. The greatest difference for Ṣabrī is that her female characters, like those of several other younger writers, are no longer silent, subjected, marginalised like those of the previous writers, but they seek freedom, refuse

[252] Gail Ramsay. 'Styles of Expression in Women's Literature in the Gulf', *Orientalia Suecana*, 51-52, (2002-2003), pp. 371-90.
[253] Hisham Sharabi defines neopatriarchy 'modernized patriarchy' in which 'material modernization, the first (surface) manifestation of social change, only served to remodel and reorganise patriarchal structures and relations and to reinforce them by giving them "modern" forms and appearances.' See Hisham Sharabi. *Neopatriarchy: a Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 4.
[254] This is an expression Sharabi used in *Ibid.* p. 24.
[255] Ṣabrī. *Op. cit.*, pp. 51, 55.
[256] *Ibid.* p. 22.

to obey traditional norms and rebel against subjection, whether in social or love relationships, despite the fact that the social pressure to which they are exposed has not decreased with the start of the new century.[257]

Younger writers employ a considerable variety of artistic tools: styles ranging from the abstract to the expressionist and symbolic, interior monologue, stream of consciousness, soliloquy, free association of ideas, cinematographic and theatrical techniques, and circular structure. They have also tried two alternative narrative structures: a) one that constructs the text from the outside, in which the first sentence of the story only sets the atmosphere that will prevail in the story without any further detail; the subsequent description of the setting is laden with the atmosphere of the story and the psychological state of the narrator; time is not linear but is made up of interconnected fragments of past and present and 'objective' time linked to events; b) one that constructs the text from the inside, in which the self is at the heart of the happenings, being interconnected with their order and evolution, and also determines the temporal dimension of the narration, causing the use of subjective time rather than metric time.[258] Hence it is possible to say that younger writers have taken the Emirati short story to fully-fledged modernism.

2.3. The Maghreb

a) Morocco

In Morocco in the second decade of the 20th century in the newspaper *al-Saᶜādah* appeared what is considered the first example of a rudimentary short story, written by Wadīᶜ Karam,[259] after which there were several examples of tales, vignettes, stories of various kinds. Nevertheless it was necessary to wait until the end of the 1940's to see some literary works that could be considered imperfect short stories, which matured tremendously in the 1950's, condensing

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[257] *Ibid.* pp. 59-85.
[258] Subjective time is a modernist technique explained on p. 80 above.
[259] Aḥmad al-Madīnī. *Fann al-Qiṣṣah al-Qaṣīrah bi-l-Maghrib fī al-Nash'ah wa al-Taṭawwur wa al-Ittijāhāt.* (Bayrūt: Dār al-ᶜAwdah, [198?]), pp. 65-8.

in less than two decades synchronic phases that in the Levant had developed diachronically in a much longer time span: unsigned serialised translations and adaptations of French and English works were published in newspapers side by side with historical, nationalist, social and romantic short stories. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz bin ᶜAbd Allah (1923) was one of the pioneers of the historical short story and started serialising his stories in the newspaper *al-ᶜAlam* at the end of the 1940's with serious artistic and intellectual intent; he set his stories in Arab Andalusia or in ancient periods of Moroccan history, using famous or little known events as a background.[260]

The nationalist short story became a vehicle to convey Moroccans' experience of colonialism and fight for independence and to exhort them to continue their resistance and to educate them to the idea of an independent Morocco; among its representatives is ᶜAbd al-Karīm Ghallāb (1919/22), whose short stories are wrapped in a depressing atmosphere and populated either by losers subjected powerlessly to their dire fate and helpless victims of the political system, or by fearless heroes ready to self-sacrifice.[261] Aḥmad Bannānī (1918) was one of the pioneers of the social short story, who successfully and in a lively way depicted traditions, issues, activities present in the colonised Moroccan society of his time with the aim to criticise Moroccan society and 'transform it into a healthy patriotic society'. Although he also wrote nationalist stories, Muḥammad al-Khaḍir al-Raysūnī (1919/29) is considered mainly a romantic writer, in whose short stories contemplation of nature and introspection have a paramount role.[262]

After the acquisition of independence (1956) the cultural relations between Morocco and the Levant strengthened; the influence of Levantine writers induced in the Moroccan short story of the sixties an extremely rapid evolution and the simultaneous existence of several approaches. The already existing social short stories were now orientated towards the many post-

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[260] See *Ibid.* pp. 133-46 for more details about historical short stories.
[261] See Umberto Rizzitano. 'Il «Racconto» (*qiṣṣah*) nella Narrativa Araba Contemporanea del Marocco', in *Atti del Terzo Congresso di Studi Arabi e Islamici*, Ravello 1-6 settembre 1966. Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1967, pp. 581-8 for more details on nationalist short stories.
[262] See al-Madīnī. *Op. cit.*, pp. 101-21 for social short stories and quote (p. 101); pp. 85-98 for romantic short stories.

independence social, cultural, political issues, and were inhabited by peasants, workers, the poor, all oppressed by a social injustice that they did not fight. That was the main, if not the only, reality represented by social writers within a traditional narrative structure often deprived of variety. Muḥammad Barrādah (1938), instead, was the one that introduced variety within this trend by creating short stories in which social issues are shown dialectically interconnected with personal ones, characters are not only one-dimensional social agents but also bearers of psychological, intellectual and existential dimensions, using various narrative styles, e.g. memoirs.[263]

Another tendency was critical realism, which overcame the limits of the social tendency, such as literality, direct, primitive, mechanical and one-sided way to look at reality, limited awareness, because Moroccan critical realism had a wider and more varied vision of reality and a stronger artistic sensibility, which were more suitable to represent the growing complexity and mutations of post-independence Morocco. This tendency is represented by Muḥammad Zifzāf (1942/5-2001), with his focus on the individual's personal, psychological and social worries as the prototype of thousands of Moroccans living in a world of desperation and oppression; Zaynab Fahmī (1941), better known as Rafīqah al-Ṭabīᶜah, who in the late 1960's started publishing short stories in the newspaper *al-ᶜAlam* that focussed on the daily life of the lower classes, on accidental, common events, rather than on outstanding and meaningful moments. Al-Madīnī sees her sharing the same limitations of many critical realist writers, such as transposing external reality into a realistic artistic content without an adequate artistic presentation, due to the prevalence of realistic writers' critical aim over artistic aspects such as unity and focus in the narrative. Nevertheless she deserves credit for treating both the personal and the social dimensions as material for her stories, in which both dimensions are often successfully united in one ensemble.[264]

The late 1960's 'new realism' was influenced by the Levantine 'sixties generation', whose examples pushed Moroccan writers towards the

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[263] See *Ibid.* pp. 277-302 for more details.

[264] For details on Zifzāf see *Ibid.* pp. 346-54 and Mohammed Albakry and Roger Allen. 'The Literary World of Muḥammad Zifzāf: Three Short Stories', *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 10:2, (August 2007), pp. 129-136. On Fahmī see al-Madīnī. *Op. cit.*, pp. 331-5.

exploration of new grounds, such as the psychological analysis of characters and formal experimentation. New realists overcame the restricted horizons of critical realism and added the human dimension the latter was lacking, in the sense that writers now conveyed their own individual experiences and visions of reality and human beings without any pretence of objectivity. Apart from Zifzāf, whose short stories evolved towards new realism, other writers of this trend are Muḥammad Shukrī (1935-2003), with his artistic world inhabited nearly exclusively by outcasts living lives of utter deprivation, and Khannātah Bannūnah (1937/40), whose five collections published between the late sixties and the late eighties are characterised by her will to deconstruct the pre-existing structure and the coherence of the narrative form to give her short stories unique narrative structures and form that distinguish her from her contemporaries. She utilises the self, rebellious against reality, rather than external reality as source of material, because she rejects the objective world to embrace the internal world. The contents of her stories are presented as evolving and open material without a complete and definitive form, hence prone to multiple interpretations, which are not helped by any kind of 'instructions'.[265]

Fahmī and Bannūnah paved the way for the 'explosion' of short stories by women that started in the 1980-90's and continues in the first decade of the 21st century with Rabīᶜah Rīḥān; Laṭīfah Bāqā (1964), who treats with courage the taboos and the issues the Moroccan younger generation must face, such as unemployment, the radical changes of values, the disillusions caused by the many broken promises of modernity, with a style that prefers open endings that open up texts towards several directions that the author only makes visible without opting for any of them; Rajā' al-Ṭālibī (1966), whose texts merge together the features of short stories with those of prose *qaṣīdah* and poetic prose, through the use of several linguistic registers, such as philosophical, meditative, mystic.[266]

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[265] See *Ibid.* pp. 357-74 for new realism; pp. 375-89 for Shukrī; pp. 398-426 for Bannūnah.

[266] For details on Rīḥān see chapter four; for Bāqā see Ramṣīṣ Muḥammad (13/07/2006): «Qirā'ah fī al-Majmūᶜah al-Qiṣaṣiyyah "Mā alladhī Nafᶜalu?" li-Laṭīfah Bāqā». WWW document, URL: http://www.doroob.com/?p=9470, retrieved on 03/01/2008; for al-Ṭālibī see http://www.geocities.com/rajaetalbi/index.html.

b) Tunisia

The first Tunisian short story was written in the first decade of the 20th century by Ḥasan Ḥusnī ᶜAbd al-Wahhāb (1883-1968),[267] immediately followed by other few examples of stories containing social and political criticism, which nevertheless remained isolated. The genre took roots in Tunisian literature only from the 1930's, when ᶜAlī al-Dūᶜājī (1909-49), who is considered the father of the Tunisian short story[268] emerged within *Taḥta al-Sūr* (Under the Wall), a group of young bohemian writers of Tunis. Al-Dūᶜājī and Bashīr Khurayyif (1917-83) pioneered the use of Tunisian vernacular in short stories, but Khurayyif limited its use to dialogues. Al-Dūᶜājī used the vernacular because he intended to renew Tunisian literature and to make it accessible to Tunisians. In his stories he expressed the attitude and the dilemma of the intellectuals of his generation, who faced a colonial regime that simultaneously brought repression and modernity, sharing with Khurayyif the theme of the clash between the traditional Tunisian society and the modernisation project of the colonisers.

The 1940's saw the appearance of a unique figure in the Tunisian literary field: Maḥmūd al-Masᶜadī (1911/5-2004/5), who directed the magazine *al-Mabāḥith* (Researches), in which modern writers, including himself, published their works before independence. Fontaine attributes to al-Masᶜadī the role of pioneer of modernity and the merit of having spread existentialist theories in Tunisian literature. His short stories uniquely combine metaphysical anguish, political commitment and a style that recalls Qur'anic prose and pre-Islamic poetry for its linguistic purity that rejects any influence of foreign languages or Tunisian vernacular.[269]

Tunisian short story writers have followed a path different from that of their Levantine counterparts because of their long lasting attachment to traditional modes of writing which lasts until the 1980's. Both Fontaine and al-ᶜĀmirī divide writers into two big groups: those that used classical forms and

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[267] Jean Fontaine. *Histoire de la Littérature Tunisienne par les Textes. Tome II. Du XIII^e Siècle à l'Indépendance.* ([Tunis?]: Édition Sahar, 1994), p. 120.
[268] *Ibid.* p. 170.
[269] For references and details see Jean Fontaine. *La Littérature Tunisienne Contemporaine.* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1990), pp. 53, 55.

those who used new forms and then proceed with further internal subdivisions for each group. Al-ᶜĀmirī divides the classical writers into eight realist tendencies that are interconnected, can be found in the same writer or even in the same short story, and are characterised by unity of time and space and the use of traditional language and narrative structure.[270] Fontaine instead classifies the classical authors into conservatives, moderns and realists. Conservatives used also traditional contents, such as themes of love, marriage, familial issues, homeland, nationalist fight, and were highly didactic and idealistic; among those writers are Nājiyah Tāmir (1926-88) and Yaḥyā Muḥammad (1931), who started writing respectively in the 1950's and '60's.[271]

Moderns and realists instead innovated their contents, with moderns influenced by al-Masᶜadī and sharing his existentialist concerns, pessimism and sadness, and realists describing reality without idealism. Among the moderns are Ḥasan Naṣr[272] (1937) and Ḥayāh bint al-Shaykh (1943), who started writing respectively in the 1960's and '70's: Naṣr depicted a world torn apart by the impact of modernity, whose characters are disillusioned with independence, alienated and lonely within their own environment; bint al-Shaykh preferred to depict, sometimes symbolically, sometimes realistically, the personal/psychological and social dilemmas of modern women (mostly in dark colours) and social issues.[273] Among realists are Muḥammad al-Hādī ibn Ṣālih (1945) and Naᶜīmah al-Ṣayd (1945), who started publishing short stories respectively in the 1970's and 1980's: the former describes the contradictions of his society and the grim of everyday life in the streets; the latter represents the feminist fight against women's belittlement and for the re-evaluation of the body as an instrument of power.[274]

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[270] See the scheme in Muḥammad al-Hādī al-ᶜĀmirī. *Al-Qiṣṣah al-Tūnisiyyah al-Qaṣīrah min khilāl Majallat al-Fikr.* (Tūnus: Dār Bū Salāmah li-l-Ṭibāᶜah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzīᶜ, 1980), p. 22 and its explanation on pp. 132-6. Al-ᶜĀmirī only examines the short stories published in the magazine *al-Fikr* in 1966-9.

[271] Fontaine. *La Littérature Tunisienne Contemporaine*, p. 34.

[272] Al-ᶜĀmirī considers him the best representative of critical realism; see al-ᶜĀmirī. *Op. cit.*, p. 133 ; for further details see also M.J.L. Young. 'Aspects of the Modern Tunisian Short Story', *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies),* 10:2, (1983), pp. 111-20.

[273] See Fontaine. *La Littérature Tunisienne Contemporaine,* pp. 49-52 for more details. Muḥammad Barrādah includes bint al-Shaykh among the authors who employed traditional forms and contents; see ᶜĀshūr, Ghazūl, Rashīd [et al.] (eds.). *Op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 248.

[274] Barrādah disagrees with Fontaine because he includes al-Ṣayd among writers who use experimental ways of writing and existentialist and psychological themes. See *Ibid.*

The novelties introduced by the other group of writers are psychology, philosophy, stream of consciousness, interior monologue, refusal of tradition's values in the name of the search for their own new paths, pessimism. Their ancestor is Ṣālih al-Qarmādī (1933-82), who started publishing in 1961 short stories that mixed 'fantasy and rebellion, the strange and the social',[275] and who, as a lecturer, contributed to the formation of the young writers who in 1971 started publishing in the magazine *al-Ayyām* works that aimed at familiarising the readers with their new literature. This new literature, called avant-gardist or experimental, was founded by ᶜIzz al-Dīn al-Madanī (1938), who theorised and practised a literature featuring extreme formal experiments, a specific national character, a dialogic relation with Arabic literary traditions and European contemporary literatures. These elements engendered literary forms that did not imitate any pre-existing model, but opened up new paths, as it can be seen in al-Madanī's first collection (1968), an avant-gardist re-elaboration of Tunisian legends with open endings and several narrators.[276]

To the same trend belonged ᶜArūsiyyah al-Nālūtī (1950), who, despite having published only one collection of short stories in 1975, has distinguished herself for the important role fantasy and symbolism have in her short stories, characterised by a poetic prose with a deconstructed syntax, the theme of incommunicability among human beings, her concern for the outcasts of her society.[277] On the contrary Nāfilah Dhahab's (1947) 1970's short stories seem disengaged from the social context, hence they have been considered expression of an elitist individualism, accompanied by a surrealist atmosphere in which it is difficult to distinguish reality from dream. In her 1980-90's works instead the outcasts appear, while her stylistic features remain the same: musicality, short sentences, simple language, conciseness bordering on opaqueness. In the 1990's also started appearing the short stories of Ḥayāh al-Rāyyis and Rashīdah al-Turkī, some of which will be examined in chapter four.

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[275] Fontaine. *La Littérature Tunisienne Contemporaine,* p. 76.
[276] For details see Antonella Ghersetti. 'Letteratura Sperimentale e Rapporto con la Tradizione nei Racconti di ᶜIzz al-Dīn al-Madanī', *Oriente Moderno*, 77:2-3, (1997), pp. 105-23.
[277] See bibliography for collection details and Mirella Cassarino. «*'Ḥattā al-Qubūr, Yāsīn... Tarfuḍu al-Iṣġā',* di ᶜArūsiyya al-Nālūtī, una Voce dell'Avanguardia Tunisina», *Annali di Ca' Foscari, 23*:3, (1989), pp. 69-76 for details on al-Nālūtī.

CHAPTER TWO

DESPONDENT FEMALE SUBJECTS IN THE LEVANT AND EGYPT

This second chapter, devoted to the Levant and Egypt, will be divided into four sections corresponding to the four writers representing the area, and each section will be structured as follows: concise personal profile of the writer; brief outline of the essential features of her short story production; my close readings of the selected short stories as per research questions delineated on p. 55 above, which will also justify my choice of stories and refer to any pre-existing writings about them; comparison of the analysed stories that defines the typology of subjects appearing in them.[278] This structure will apply to all the sections of the two subsequent chapters. This chapter will open with Nādiyā Khūst, followed by Hādiyā Sa^{c}īd, Liyānah Badr and Nūrā Amīn. The order of the writers is due to the geographical position of the countries they represent, placed around the Mediterranean Sea from its east shore towards its south shore, and to the writers' ages organised in descending order.

1) Nādiyā Khūst

Nādiyā Khūst was born in 1935 in Damascus, in whose university she gained her undergraduate degree in philosophy. She obtained her doctorate[279] at

[278] A more general comparison delineating the typology of subjects encountered in the three geographical areas will be found in chapter five.

[279] Three sources state that her doctorate was in Russian literature: Jūzīf Zaydān. *Maṣādir al-Adab al-Nisā'ī fī al-^{c}Ālam al-^{c}Arabī al-Hadīth, 1800-1996.* (Bayrūt: al-Mu'assasah al-^{c}Arabiyyah

Moscow University and then studied French at Strasbourg University. She has written short stories, novels, children's stories, studies, newspaper articles, scripts for television series and critical essays.[280] She has been a councillor in Damascus council, is still actively involved in several conservation projects to preserve ancient Damascus and serves in the Arab Writers Union's executive committee.

Khūst's short stories have attracted little critical attention if compared to her novels. *Uḥibbu al-Shām* (I Love Damascus)[281] demonstrated Khūst's adherence to Syrian modernism[282] with its preference for interior monologue, frank approach to social problems, characters from lower social strata, dialogues in Syrian dialect. *Fī al-Qalb Shay' Ākhar* (Something Else in the Heart)[283] presents human beings living joyless lives in harsh realities that crush honesty, friendship and love, whether maternal, fraternal, romantic, or patriotic. Khūst analyses with depth her characters' interior torments, placed within vaguely depicted settings that are impossible to identify. The stories of *Fī Sijn ᶜAkkā* (In Acre's Prison) instead have settings all identifiable as Syria, Palestine and Lebanon, presented as countries in war or under Israeli occupation in six of the seven stories of this collection. There is a clear shift between the lyrical language used to depict the characters' serene lives and homelands before war/occupation and the directness with which Khūst depicts the destruction and dehumanisation war/occupation causes. *Lā Makān li-l-Gharīb* (No Place for the Stranger)[284] is dominated by two main topics: doomed romantic relations and the injustice that crushes defenceless people and destroys any chance of a fulfilling life and even of a dignified death,

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li-l-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1999), p. 248; Adīb ᶜIzzat. *Muᶜjam Kuttāb Sūriyā*. (Dimashq: Dar al-Wathbah, n.d), p. 54; Samar Rūḥī al-Fayṣal. *Muᶜjam al-Qāṣṣāt wa al-Rawā'iyyāt al-ᶜArabiyyāt.* (Ṭarābulus [Lubnān]: Garrūs Pirs, 1996), p. 120.
Two sources state that it was in comparative literature: ᶜĀshūr, Ghazūl, Rashīd [et al.] (eds.). *Op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 301; Marwān al-Miṣrī and Muḥammad ᶜAlī Waᶜlānī. *Al-Kātibāt al-Sūriyyāt [1892-1987].* (Dimashq: Dār al-Ahālī li-l- Ṭibāᶜah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzīᶜ, 1988), p. 97.
[280] See bibliography for details.
[281] 'Al-Shām' can be translated also 'Greater Syria'.
[282] Details about Khūst's Levantine literary context can be found on pp. 76-86 above.
[283] For Baldissera and ᶜAbd al-Fattāḥ Qalᶜatjī this collection is influenced by Russian literature; see Baldissera. *Op. cit.* p. 99; al-Miṣrī and Waᶜlānī. *Op. cit.*, p. 98. The latter analyses two stories that I do not consider.
[284] Ṣubḥī Ḥadīdī has briefly analysed a story of this collection I did not chose; see ᶜĀshūr, Ghazūl, Rashīd [et al.] (eds.). *Op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 194.

depicted with black humour. Khūst's language eschews emotiveness, preferring a calm tone and simplicity of expression.

The first short story I will analyse is "Darb al-Ālām" (The Path of Pains), from *Fī al-Qalb Shay' Ākhar*, which I have selected because it shows the attempted subjectivation process of the protagonist Hudā, whose life is followed from adolescence to adulthood.

Being ninety-one-pages long, I believe that this story constitutes an example of long short story, because despite its length it preserves several characteristics of lyrical short stories indicated by Eileen Baldeshwiler:[285] a) it successfully conveys the characters', particularly Hudā's, states of mind, emotions and dreams, adopting a plot dense with reflections rather than with events; b) it reduces external action to a minimum, i.e. the description of the engagement, the wedding preparation, the three births and the two abortions; c) since it aims mainly at registering Hudā's experiences of intense feeling and rendering her psychic reality, a real conclusion is not reached, hence it is open-ended. Another feature of short stories "Darb al-Ālām" possesses, which is due to the prevalence of interior reality over external, is the suffocating atmosphere of immobility (Hudā's relocation from her paternal to her marital house is the only move), endless despair, solitude and humiliation that wraps it and simultaneously brightens up the story and obfuscates its outlines, as Eudora Welty indicated.[286]

Most of all it is Hudā's isolation and loneliness that make this text a modern short story. She is O'Connor's 'lonely individual',[287] constantly expressing and experiencing the rift existing between her on one side and other women, Ḥamdī, her relatives, her friends and her society on the other. Such split in the first eighteen pages of the narrative, which cover her adolescence and the period preceding her second child's birth, derives from Hudā's need of being distinguished from her community as 'a unique and special individual',[288] in which she failed as it will be shown. In the rest of the

[285] See Baldeshwiler's 1969 essay reproduced in May (ed.). *Short Story Theories,* pp. 202-13.
[286] See her 1949 essay in *Ibid.* pp. 159-77.
[287] O'Connor. *Op. cit.,* p. 31; plural in the original.
[288] Hafez. *The Quest for Identities*, p. 36.

story the need turns into an imposition because her community (including her husband) marks her out through individualisation.[289] In the first three pages Hudā proclaims that 'she is not one of the herd',[290] distinguished from other girls and illiterate women because she is young, beautiful, educated, aspires to study, work and possibly find love. When the school ends and she is ready for university, her mother suggests to get married and postpone her degree, since she has many suitors, and without insisting she convinces her, putting her on display in front of strangers who have to judge Hudā's suitability as wife. Despite feeling embarrassed and humiliated, Hudā cooperates in the show, which turns her into a commodity offered for sale to the best bidder, and justifies the practice as 'a tradition', 'the road to men' on which many have walked before her.[291]

After boasting at length about her distinction when she has the opportunity to demonstrate it by resisting her mother's proposal and continuing her studies, Hudā follows the same path other women have followed before her. She cooperates in her own objectification and justifies it, hence becoming accomplice of men, as de Beauvoir indicated,[292] and also of her mother, tempted more by the attentions she receives during the 'shows' than by university studies and possibly scared by the spinsterhood that her mother sees striking female graduates.[293] This is an example of the structural irony recurrent in this story that follows a constant pattern: firstly the enunciation of Hudā's resolution to do something differently, secondly the description of her practical actions blatantly belying her resolutions.

Hudā, who proclaimed 'A life without love! Impossible?',[294] acquiesces to her parents' decision to marry her to Ḥamdī, a traditional man she does not even like and who marries her not because of love but because he sees in her his ideal wife: obedient, young, beautiful, malleable, happy to slave away

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[289] See Introduction p. 57 for the difference between need and imposition of distinction.
[290] Nādiyā Khūst. *Fī al-Qalb Shay' Ākhar: Majmūᶜat Qiṣaṣ*. (Dimashq: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa al-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1979), p. 161.
[291] *Ibid.* p. 165.
[292] See Introduction p. 54.
[293] Khūst. *Op. cit.*, p. 165.
[294] *Ibid.* p. 162.

indoors for him and his children as full-time housewife, exhibitable,[295] i.e. a common woman part of the herd and a non-subject in de Beauvoir's terms. Hudā quickly forgets her aspirations to love, study and work, settling for 'a man with an income'[296] as her mother wants, never manifesting any opposition, so that everybody perceives her as a common girl and not as the 'distinguished special girl' she misperceives herself to be. She is determined to start with Ḥamdī «a new life [..] different from my mother's life and her neighbours'»[297] and then leads a life identical to that of many other women. She cleans, cooks, serves Ḥamdī, satisfies his sexual needs, brings into the world and raises his children with enormous self-sacrifice, pain, endless care, no help and no recognition, because, as Kandiyoti indicates, in classic patriarchy 'patrilineage totally appropriates women's labor and progeny and renders their work and contribution to production invisible'.[298]

When Hudā realises that this is not the new life to which she aspired and complains to her mother she is told that this is the norm and, although enraged by her mother's resignation and critical of it,[299] she just follows the same path of resignation. She does not insist on going to university when Ḥamdī refuses his permission with an excuse (he secretly abhors the idea that Hudā could go to university), she accepts a second unwanted pregnancy, she does not react when Ḥamdī belittles the fatigue her work of mother and housewife implies.[300] She does not even try to resist the power that her husband exerts on her. When she turns to her mother or other adult women for help they reveal themselves to be channels of the same power that passes through and relies on them, without them being conscious, in order to reach young women like Hudā and the rest of society.[301] At this stage Hudā is unconsciously 'the principle of [her] own subjection'[302] because she has interiorised power's gaze

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[295] *Ibid.* p. 166.
[296] *Ibid.* p. 166.
[297] *Ibid.* p. 168.
[298] Deniz Kandiyoti. 'Bargaining with Patriarchy', *Gender & Society,* 2:3, (September 1988), p. 279.
[299] Khūst. *Op. cit.,* p. 175.
[300] *Ibid.* p. 176-8.
[301] See Introduction pp. 17-8 for Foucault's reflections about the exertion of power.
[302] See *Ibid.* p. 21.

and lets it play upon herself, just like other women, despite feeling proudly different.

The second child's birth is a Joycean epiphany for Hudā that changes her opinion about Ḥamdī, her own familial role and her behaviour:

أحست هدى بأن حمدي لا يمكن
أن يفهمها لأنه لا يعرف عملها ، وأنها غريبة عنه .[303]

The distinction she once pursued has now turned into estrangement and incommunicability with Ḥamdī and even her mother,[304] causing the deep solitude from which Hudā suffers terribly throughout the whole story.[305] She realises with distress that her children belong to their father and his family, while she is the only one to care for them and the house, because her female ancestors have allowed this to happen. This new awareness induces Hudā to break her silence and criticise her 'backward country' that 'immobilises women behind pots',[306] showing for the first time that she possesses her own voice, discordant with her ancestors'. This transforms Hudā in Ḥamdī's eyes into an alien 'from another world with which he is unconnected',[307] whom he considers dangerous for his family, hence he decides to act:

وحاول أن يستعيد شكلها القديم ، أنوثتها ، رقتها ،
احمرار خديها ، خجلها ، ولم يستطع .
— « [..] اخترت امرأتي على الشكل الذي أريده
فانقلبت إلى الشكل الذي لا أريده ! »[308]

Ḥamdī does not accept Hudā's changes and he feels nearly cheated, since the little girl he had dearly paid because she possessed all the 'feminine' qualities he wanted in a wife has now lost many of those qualities and acquired others he dislikes. He tries to restore in her the qualities she once had as if he were Hudā's owner and she were a malleable object, but he fails.

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[303] 'Hudā felt that Ḥamdī could not understand her because he did not know her work and that she was a stranger to him.' Khūst. *Op. cit.*, p. 179.
[304] Her mother declares that she does not understand her in *Ibid.* p. 183.
[305] See *Ibid.* pp. 189,192, 198, 200, 201, 206, 215, 240, 248.
[306] *Ibid.* p. 184.
[307] *Ibid.*
[308] 'He tried to restore her old shape, her femininity, her gracefulness, her blushing cheeks, her timidity, and he could not.
— «[..] I have chosen my wife in the shape that I want and she has been transformed into the shape I do not want!»' *Ibid.* pp. 185-6.

Hudā now is a resisting vocal woman that 'does not defend only herself but all women',[309] a change that nevertheless does not induce him to consider Hudā a subject. On the contrary throughout the story he does his utmost to hamper Hudā's attempts to become a subject and to push her back into her subjected subject position, eager to preserve his sovereign subject position.[310] He decides that they will have four children and gets her pregnant five times despite her wish to have only two children, using the third pregnancy to prevent her from going to university. He forbids her to work.[311] The relationship between Hudā and Ḥamdī is now a clear power relation in which both strive to impose their contrasting wills in a silent hostility that permeates their marital life. Discussions happen nearly exclusively in the presence of relatives and friends, with whom Hudā engages in fiery debates about women's conditions in her country, in which it is possible to trace an intellectual evolution that Ḥamdī cannot and does not want to follow.[312] Hudā's first step in her intellectual evolution is the consciousness of some limitations of her time:

— « [..] زمننا زمن مبكر ، ولا حق لي في كلماتي
الخاصة وطباعي ، وعملي . يجب أن أكون خيال رجل
كيلا أكون خارجية . »[313]

In an age and society in which women are only allowed to be male-elaborated myths, which also happened in de Beauvoir's age and society,[314] she demands to be considered a concrete subject with her own thoughts, peculiarities and work, and she knows that because she aspires to more than society has bestowed on her she will be an outcast. In fact her community soon individualises[315] her as ill, strange, mad, abnormal, estranged from the stereotype,[316] now imposing on her the distinction about which she once boasted. Individualisation is a form of that social and sexual devaluation that

[309] *Ibid.* p. 186.
[310] This is a male technique de Beauvoir described; see Introduction p. 51.
[311] Khūst. *Op. cit.,* pp. 188-9,194-5,211-3.
[312] *Ibid.* pp. 185, 248.
[313] '— «[..] Our time is not ripe, I have no right to my own personal words, my own peculiarities and my own work: I must be a man's vision in order not to be an outsider.» *Ibid.* p. 187.
[314] See Introduction p. 52.
[315] See *Ibid.* pp. 15, 21 for Foucaultian individualisation.
[316] She is defined strange by a female friend, ill and mad by her mother and Ḥamdī, she believes that others consider her abnormal and estranged from the stereotype; Khūst. *Op. cit.,* pp. 233, 223, 236-7, 232-3.

de Beauvoir saw punishing women's non-conformity to femininity norms,[317] which in Hudā's case can reach the extreme of repudiation, which would mean for her to lose her children, dwelling and livelihood, to be socially stigmatised and to rely on her birth family for survival.[318] Nevertheless in her youth Hudā remains indifferent to these forms of devaluation and continues her theoretical explorations. Hudā shows her first great intellectual leap in the discussion with Ḥamdī about her wish to work:

سيظل البيت على كتفي ولن تتحمله أنت . لكني أريد
الشغل خارج البيت لأشعر بأني انسان ، بأني مرتبطة بأكثر
من أربعة اشخاص ، بأني مثلك . [..] شغل البيت ممل ،
مرهق ، متعب في رأيي أكثر من شغلك . [..]
أريـــد أن أحس بأني مرتبطة بالدنيا [..] أعرف أن
المرأة التي تشتغل تضيف لنفسها شغلاً جديداً . أعرف .
لكنها تصبح أقدر ، معنوياً ، على تحمل شغل البيت وهم
الأولاد ورتابة الطبخ . [..] أريد أن أعطي شيئاً جديداً .
أريد أن أصبح جديدة . [319]

For the first time she maintains, against Ḥamdī's denigration, that her incessant domestic work is heavier than Ḥamdī's workday that always ends with an evening in a café, while Hudā has no time even to eat. Her monologue reveals the high level of awareness about herself and her needs Hudā has reached, which contrasts her complete blindness to Ḥamdī's role in perpetuating her misery. She is conscious that to lead the life of a subject, like her husband, she also needs a reciprocal relationship with others, whose fundamental role in subjectivation has been explored by both Foucault and de

[317] See Introduction pp. 50-1.
[318] This is what Hudā's mother reminds her when she becomes confrontational: Ḥamdī could repudiate her for her behaviour (Khūst. *Op. cit.,* pp. 224, 236).
[319] 'The house will stay on my shoulders and you will not bear it. But I want to work outside the home in order to feel that I am a human being, that I am connected to more than four people, that I am like you. [..] Housework is boring, onerous, more tiring than your job in my opinion. [..] I want to feel that I am connected to the world [..] I know that women who work give themselves additional work. I know. But they become more intellectually capable to bear housework, childcare and cooking routine. [..] I want to give something new. I want to become new.' *Ibid.* pp. 210-1. Since the words humanity/human being in this text are often associated with choice, action, ambition, etc., I think that Khūst uses these terms like de Beauvoir used it (see quotation and note 148 on p. 53 Introduction), i.e. as opposed to objectification/object, hence as the equivalent of subjectivity/subject.

Beauvoir,[320] hence her wish to enlarge her acquaintances. She refuses to be reduced to her present domestic role that cuts her away from the world and dissatisfies her and seeks to transcend it through paid employment, in which she sees a possibility to establish a connection with the world and to contribute something new to it and to renew herself. Hence she confirms de Beauvoir's vision: women cannot be reduced to what they were in the past or they are in the present because they are transcendence and overcoming.[321]

Despite being singularly situated in a patriarchal socio-historical context that has trained her only for domestic, reproductive and servile roles, the young Hudā would like to contribute to the world, hence she is a rare case of woman willing to face the world in a patriarchal society.[322] However Ḥamdī ignores her insistence and forbids her to work. Notwithstanding, at this stage of her intellectual evolution Hudā still cannot perceive that Ḥamdī's obstructionism and lack of cooperation in sharing domestic and childcare tasks are a determinant part of her wretchedness because they tie her to domesticity. Like her entourage she fails to notice that the traditional distribution of familial/domestic responsibilities and legal rights between spouses is problematic. This demonstrates that, although she believes that she is not one of the herd, at this juncture she partially shares the mentality of relatives and friends that in many conversations pressurise her to devote herself completely to domestic and maternal tasks and to find her happiness in them because this is the norm.

Years later instead Hudā understands that men's refusal of domestic tasks negatively affects women and argues against this with her guests, courageously facing their strong opposition and condemnation. Nevertheless, reminded by her mother that she could well be repudiated,[323] she does nothing to materialise her verbal challenge. Although she contemplates the possibility to divorce, she remains Ḥamdī's devoted servant and hence his accomplice in her own subjection. This is not due to the temptation of the irresponsible and easy life of the object as de Beauvoir stated, or to the little awareness of her

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[320] See Introduction pp. 29-32, 52.
[321] See *Ibid.* p. 52.
[322] De Beauvoir shows that the contrary usually happens; see *Ibid.* pp. 54-5.
[323] Khūst. *Op. cit.,* pp. 234-6.

situation as I suggested,[324] since her life is hard and full of responsibilities and she demonstrates awareness. Hudā's complicity in her own subjection is motivated by fear of the consequences of divorce: loss of her children; financial difficulties in which she would find herself without income and dwelling; social exclusion; the loss of her habitual life, to which she feels bound despite its oppressiveness and for which she lacks a replacement.[325]

This last element is a result of the disciplinary power to which Hudā has been exposed all her life. By strictly regimenting her life, by denying her freedom of choice and by punishing all her non-conform opinions with individualisation power has prevented her from becoming a 'human being'[326] endowed with agency and has fabricated in her a subjectivity that is now assisting power in its subjection of Hudā.[327] While once she longed for a 'face-to-face with the given world'[328] because of her juvenile arrogance, the constraints that have crushed her through the years have tamed her and transformed her into a frail woman that is untrained to exert agency and feels unprepared to leave her mediocre, regimented, certain life and to face the world to build a new, freer, risky life.

The major instrument through which Ḥamdī and her entourage subject Hudā is the 'political device' of sexuality.[329] The myths about abortion and how a foetus' sex is determined, which Hudā's relatives and Ḥamdī's want her to believe,[330] are a local adaptation of the Foucauldian *scientia sexualis* that hides the truth of sex for regulating sexuality so that it perpetuates social relations that guarantee women's subjection. Ḥamdī and the relatives several times use sexuality as a bio-power instrument through which they can control Hudā's body and exploit it for their own purposes: Ḥamdī gets her pregnant for the third time so that she cannot go to university; Ḥamdī and the relatives insist that she must conceive more children to increase her status and please Ḥamdī, which results in her having a third unwanted child; Ḥamdī does not

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[324] Introduction p. 54.
[325] Khūst. *Op. cit.,* pp. 225-7.
[326] This is what Hudā aspires to; see this chapter pp. 110, 113.
[327] See Introduction pp. 18-9 for Foucault's subjectivity as product and instrument of power.
[328] De Beauvoir's words; see *Ibid.* p. 54.
[329] See *Ibid.* pp. 22-6 for sexuality as 'political device', *scientia sexualis*, and bio-power.
[330] Khūst. *Op. cit.,* pp. 192,196.

want her to abort their fourth child so that he can have his ideal family.[331] Through the sexual control of her body they can strictly regulate and limit Hudā's life, because they relegate her to her traditional role of female against Hudā's wish:

— أريد أن اختار . أريد انسانيتي .[..] أريد مكاناً غير المكان الذي عين للمرأة والأم . أريد عملاً له ضرورة وأهمية في الحياة .[332]

Hudā aspires to freedom of choice, a job, the humanity[333] of which she is presently deprived because her patriarchal family and society have harnessed her exclusively to sexual (in the widest sense of the word) and servile roles, the only roles assigned to women and mothers. In the endless debates in which relatives and friends force on her the idea that this is the incontrovertible reality, Hudā continues to defend for years her aspirations to be a complete human being and 'refuses to limit herself to her role of female because she does not want to mutilate herself'.[334]

Despite the fact that Hudā constantly belies her statements with her acts in the many examples of structural irony visible throughout the story, sexuality is the only field in which Hudā is mostly successful in keeping her propositions. In fact she terminates her third and fifth unwanted pregnancies, resisting everybody's pressure and succeeds in tarnishing Ḥamdī's sovereign subject position by her coldness during sexual intercourse. He notices that 'she does not respond to him, as if her intellectual aloofness from him distances her emotionally from him', which embarrasses him and makes him feel that 'he loses something he possesses'.[335] He feels his possession of Hudā challenged by the fact that his legally owned female is subtracting her emotions from his control, which endangers his position of sovereign subject/overseer and could be interpreted as a form of resistance. These are the only episodes of concrete resistance though, because even when later

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[331] *Ibid.* pp. 188-9, 194-5, 209, 238.
[332] '— I want to choose. I want my humanity. [..] I want a place that is not the place assigned to women and mothers. I want a job that is necessary and important in life.' *Ibid.* pp. 203-4.
[333] See note 318 p. 111 for the meaning of 'humanity'.
[334] These are de Beauvoir's words; see Introduction p. 48.
[335] Khūst. *Op. cit.,* p. 222.

'Hudā decides that Ḥamdī is her enemy', because he is the one who 'benefits from the laws that make of her a lifelong worker without any employee's rights',[336] she keeps performing all her duties. She even justifies Ḥamdī and herself as 'victims of inveterate traditions to which nobody can stand up on his own',[337] failing to perceive that Ḥamdī clings to those traditions because they benefit him.

After an ellipsis[338] of fifteen years, in this story's last seven pages a forty-year-old dejected Hudā still wishes to be 'equal to any man' and 'to start something',[339] but pathetically justifies her inability to do so with the workload her family still entails. Her old enemy Ḥamdī is not 'the only one responsible for the loss of her dreams'; she now pities him as 'one among millions of men who waste their only life' and herself as 'one among millions of women [..] whose feelings are disregarded by the world'.[340] Therefore the initial perception of herself as different from other women by the end of the story has revealed itself to be only self-deception because: she admits that she shares many women's fate and the responsibility for her failures; she is not capable of starting afresh because she feels frightened, worn, unprepared and old, having spent most of her life and energy in exhausting domestic tasks; she cannot maintain herself and is hence financially dependent on her family.[341]

The second story I will examine is "Al-Ḥubb al-Qadīm" (The Old Love) from *Lā Makān li-l-Gharīb*, which I have selected because it exemplifies a narrative structure and a female subject that are the opposite of the ones illustrated in "Darb al-Ālām". In fact while the latter has a strictly chronological narration, the former is interspersed with frequent analepses[342] that bring the narration back of fifteen years to recount the failed love story between the protagonist and a university mate. The reasons of such failure unfold through the reminiscence of the two lovers' conversations that indicate how

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[336] *Ibid.* p. 243.
[337] *Ibid.* p. 244.
[338] See definition in Gérard Genette. *Figures III.* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), p. 128.
[339] Khūst. *Op. cit.*, p. 246.
[340] *Ibid.* p. 250.
[341] *Ibid.* p. 247.
[342] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, p. 82 for definition.

diametrically opposed their visions of love relationships are. While he happily prospects a future life together in their own house, she considers that common house a form of captivity, fearing to be submerged by domestic tasks 'that kill love and suck the air out of it'[343] like her mother, an impression she derives from his words:

ـــ ربيت مرة طيراً ، وتمنيت ان امسك به لأربت
على جناحيه • انت ترفين مثله ، فلا استطيع ان امسك
بك لأؤمن بانك لي• [..]
لا اطمئن ولا احس بالسعادة الا وانت بين ذراعي في غرفة
مغلقة ، وانا وحدي امامك ، وانت مبهورة بي وحدي • [344]

The partner considers his love relation with the protagonist a relation of possession in which to be happy he needs to 'catch' her so that he can feel the exclusive and undisputed 'owner' of his beloved, just like he did with his bird. He is aware though that she, like the bird, will not allow him to catch her until she has space to fly about. Hence he must restrain her. The arms, the closed room, the loneliness with him, the aforesaid house together refer to the captivity in which he wishes to keep her so that she will be unable to do anything else but to give him her undivided attention. He wants her 'to lose herself body and soul in the one designated to her as the absolute, as the essential', the Subject in front of whom she should be just an inessential, passive object as per patriarchal rules,[345] to which he fully subscribes despite his young age and university education. Although the partner once admits to himself his oppressiveness towards the protagonist ('it seemed to me that I overwhelmed her'), he is ready to add 'But I could not feel that she was close to me and mine',[346] with which he justifies his oppressiveness as a 'romantic' measure to which the protagonist's behaviour has 'compelled' him. Nevertheless the protagonist can see through his facile explanations and realise that it is just a trite patriarchal technique, analysed by de Beauvoir, to

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[343] Nādiyā Khūst. *Lā Makān li-l-Gharīb: Qiṣaṣ*. (Dimashq: Ittiḥād al-Kuttāb al-ᶜArab, 1990), p.81.
[344] 'Once I reared a bird and I wished to catch it to pat its wings. You flutter like it, and I cannot catch you so that I can believe you are mine.[..]
I only feel calm and happy when you are in my arms in a closed room, I alone am with you, and you are charmed by me only.' *Ibid.* pp. 97, 99.
[345] See Introduction p. 53 for de Beauvoir's description of patriarchal intersexual relations.
[346] Khūst. *Lā Makān li-l-Gharīb*, p. 100.

preserve men's sovereign subject position and to keep women in the role of immanent objects.[347]

لعلني حزنت عليه يومذاك ، من الشك فـي
المرأة الذي ورثه من مكان ومـن زمان بعيـد • [..]
كنت أحب أن أمشي اليه بجناحين ، فأخفق وأنا آتي اليه •
[..] كنت احب أن أظل وأنا معه مفتوحة العينين • 348

She has perceived that the mistrust that induces him to desire her captivity is not provoked by her particular behaviour, but it is a feeling he has inherited from their traditional patriarchal culture that prevents him from trusting any woman and engenders in him the desire to curtail her freedom of movement and interests. Fifteen years later she thinks that probably she was sad for him at the time because of his constant doubt that spoiled their relationship, which nevertheless she lived as she wanted, with her eyes wide open on the world around her and still moving around autonomously, without letting him capture her or monopolise her attention. In the meantime he established between them a relationship that had several features of power relations:[349] he tried to determine her conduct through his many lengthy persuasive monologues, which the protagonist resisted by not paying attention;[350] he resorted to surveillance by spying on her with binoculars while she was at the café.[351] On her side she used the freedom implied in power relations to resist his attempt to impose on her his viewpoint ('You want me to believe that but I reject the pressure'), to defend her own vision ('But I love the world as my eyes see it.'),[352] to rebuff his guidance:

احب ان تنشر ذراعيك حولي على الدرج لتمسك بي اذا
تعثرت •[..] لكني لن أتركك تتقدمني أو تجرني • 353

[347] See Introduction p. 51.
[348] 'Maybe at the time I was sad for him, for the doubt about women that he inherited from a distant place and time. [..] I loved to walk to him with my wings and I fluttered while going to him. [..] I loved to remain with my eyes open while I was with him.' Khūst. *Lā Makān li-l-Gharīb*, p. 87.
[349] See Introduction p.18 for Foucault's definition of power relations.
[350] See Khūst. *Lā Makān li-l-Gharīb*, pp. 78-80, 83, 86, 92-3, 96.
[351] See *Ibid.* pp. 100-1.
[352] *Ibid.* pp. 84, 92.
[353] 'I love when you put your arms around me on the stairs so that you catch me if I stumble. [..] But I will not let you precede me or pull me.' *Ibid.* p. 99.

Probably to contrast the logorrhoeic and rhetorical tendencies of her partner, the protagonist states briefly and frankly that she needs a companion that is supportive and helpful in difficulties, not a leader that shows her the way or that even drags her in his chosen direction, hence putting her in the inferior position of a guided and guarded woman. She will not allow him to impose on her such role, because she has her own personal goals that transcend domesticity and marriage and contradict the norms of her social context in which 'People have captured love in short roads and have imprisoned it in houses.'[354] The protagonist is therefore not an accomplice of her subjecting partner, but transcendence, as de Beauvoir theorised.[355] Her partner cannot accept her as she is:

ـــ عيناك على الدنيا • هذا يخيفني • لك ، كالحمام
الذي هرب مني يوم ربيته ، مدى واسع • لذلك لا
تؤتمنين •[356]

This image of the eyes on the world conveys the protagonist's will to face the world around her in order to discover it. Despite having inherited a tradition that 'prevent[s] her from feeling responsible for the universe' and that has not prepared her for a 'face-to-face with the given world',[357] the protagonist has transcended such heritage and seeks involvement with the world and wider horizons than the traditional domestic ones. Her partner admits that this capacity of hers frightens him, since his social context has not prepared him to entertain relations with women with wider horizons. In front of this hurdle the partner, instead of learning strategies to deal with this kind of women, judges her. Her wide horizons are not contemplated in the femininity norms of their context and he uses this 'abnormal' feature to individualise her[358] and categorise her as untrustworthy. The protagonist is not affected by his individualisation. They split up because she understands that they cannot stay together,[359] but she does not become isolated or withdrawn. On the contrary

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[354] *Ibid.* p. 97.
[355] See Introduction p. 54 for complicity and p. 52 for transcendence.
[356] '—Your eyes are on the world. This frightens me. As the pigeon that escaped me the day I brought it up, you have vast reaches. Because of this you cannot be trusted.' Khūst. *Lā Makān li-l-Gharīb*, pp. 98-9.
[357] See Introduction pp. 54-5 for de Beauvoir's reflections on women's relations with the world.
[358] See *Ibid.* pp. 15, 21 for Foucault's definition of individualisation.
[359] Khūst. *Lā Makān li-l-Gharīb*, p. 87.

she completes her studies, gets married to someone else, has children, works and ten years after her graduation she is still regularly meeting her university female mates.

To conclude Hudā starts the story as a seventeen/eighteen-year-old who believes to be special but leads the same object life as all women surrounding her. When some years later Hudā realises that her common life is not up to her special individual's level she wants to change it and starts a fierce verbal war for change, with timid practical actions, against everyone. By the age of forty she has achieved little and surrenders, because of a combination of external factors, which are Ḥamdī's masculinist obstructionism and socio-economic obstacles, and personal factors, which are her ineffectiveness, weakness and overestimated difference. Hudā overrates herself because: she has no qualifications, professional skills, or artistic talents through which she can objectify her difference, which hence remains too often merely intellectual; she fails nearly all tests by acting against her principles; she is not ready to pay any price for defying social customs[360] with her unconventional goals and settles for the most comfortable solution like other women surrounding her. Hence, despite her partial success in managing her sexual life, by the end of the story Hudā is a self-pitying defeated subject who has lost the argumentativeness of her twenties, a lonely Hamlet who 'merely sits back and monologizes',[361] stagnating in her domestic misery.

The second protagonist is Hudā's reverse mirror image. She does not consider herself different from other women, although behaves differently. She rarely announces general principles in an argumentative tone, but states her personal positions/opinions calmly and acts accordingly, ignoring her partner's disapproval and attempts of control. She remains faithful to her uncommon aspirations, ending their relationship when she realises that it will check them. She stands in front of her beloved courageously defending her subject position against his objectifying attempts. She also has features of the ethical subject:

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[360] See Introduction pp. 50-1 for de Beauvoir's idea of transgression of femininity norms entailing a price.
[361] O'Connor. *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

she is endowed with a moral conduct that leads her 'to a certain way of being, characteristic of the ethical subject' and to a certain behaviour;[362] she refuses to adopt her partner's viewpoint and accepts only ideas born within her and under her power, which is a technique of the self to escape dependence and enslavement from anyone.[363] Fifteen years later she is far from being a lonely Hamlet like Hudā, because she is well integrated in a community of women who are all working mothers with extra-domestic interests, who set aside time to meet and support each other, encouraged by their husbands.

The different subject positions of Hudā and the second protagonist are visible also on a narratological level. Despite the recurring examples of reported speech in "Darb al-Ālām", it is the heterodiegetic narrator that controls the narration, not Hudā, who is therefore not only a defeated subject but also a 'defeated narrator'. The second protagonist instead is the autodiegetic narrator[364] that conveys not only her own experiences/words, but also those of her friends and of her partner. Friends and partner though are allowed to speak with their own voices in many dialogues, hence creating a sort of 'shared ownership' of the narrative, which suits the second protagonist's position as an ethical subject immersed in intense social relations.[365]

2) Hādiyā Sa^{c}īd

Hādiyā Sa^{c}īd was born in Beirut in 1947, where she obtained her BA in literature at the Arab University in 1969. She moved to Baghdad in 1972 and worked as a journalist for several newspapers; in 1978 she returned to Lebanon for three years, working for the newspaper *Al-Safīr*, then left for Morocco, where she worked for the newspapers *Al-^{c}Alam* and *Al-Ittiḥād al-Ishtirākī*. She moved to London in 1993, where she worked for the newspaper

[362] See Introduction p. 26.
[363] See *Ibid.* p. 30.
[364] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, p. 252-3 for definitions of heterodiegetic and autodiegetic.
[365] I am here referring to the care of the self defined by Foucault 'an intensification of social relations'. See Introduction p. 30.

Al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ, the magazine *Sayyidatī*, and BBC radio. At present she lives in Dubai and is editor in chief of *Sayyidatī*. Her oeuvre includes short stories, children's books, scripts for radio and television dramas, award-winning novels and scripts for documentaries.[366]

Despite being considered a writer who maturely employs modernist narrative techniques[367] and who 'occupies a high position among female and male writers of Arabic short stories in Lebanon and the Arab world',[368] critical works on Saᶜīd's short stories are scarce. Yumnā al-ᶜĪd finds that Saᶜīd's first four collections, written during the Lebanese war, share a dramatic reality and suffering that imbue her fictional worlds,[369] visible in the atmosphere of war, loss, separation, death and deprivation of most of *Raḥīl*'s (Departure) stories. A recurrent theme in *Yā Layl* (O Night) and *Raḥīl* is the relation between the personal and the public, which in *Raḥīl* takes a more sophisticated edge in the presentation of the dramatic conflictuality existing between individual fragmentation and collective identities and within intersexual relations. In *Ḍarbat Qamar*[370] (Moonstroke) the theme of identity, although present, loses its primacy to problematic social and interpersonal relationships. *Raḥīl* and *Ḍarbat Qamar* share also the prevalence of female protagonists. Male characters are either completely absent or relegated mostly to secondary positions from which they cannot speak with their own voice, but through the voice of a narrator, which is one of the reasons why al-Kharrāṭ considers feminism a focal point of *Raḥīl*.[371]

The first of Saᶜīd's stories I will examine is "Al-Laylatān"[372] (The Two Nights) from *Raḥīl*, which I have chosen for its focus on identity and because it

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[366] See bibliography for details.
[367] Idwār al-Kharrāṭ. Introduction to Hādiyā Saᶜīd. *Raḥīl: Qiṣaṣ*. (Al-Ribāṭ: Al-Nashr al-ᶜArabī al-Ifrīqī, 1989), p. 12.
[368] ᶜĀshūr, Ghazūl, Rashīd [et al.] (eds.). *Op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 52; this is Yumnā al-ᶜĪd's opinion. Details about the Levantine literary context can be found on pp. 76-86 above.
[369] *Ibid.*
[370] The only critical text I could trace about this collection (al-Zayyāt. *Op. cit.*) contains the reading of a story I will not examine.
[371] Al-Kharrāṭ. Introduction to Saᶜīd. *Op. cit.*, p. 16.
[372] This story has attracted al-Kharrāṭ's attention and al-ᶜĪd's. The former's reading concentrates on the issue of the dual identity of the character Ḥāzim/Maḥmūd (*Ibid.* pp. 8-9); the latter's reading, which has inspired my close-reading, focuses on the fracture of the narrator's self, which is split between the individual, the personal and the Lebanese on one

shows the fragmentation of the narrator's subjectivity, which is masterly reflected also in the story's structure. The only attempt to somewhat organise the narrative is the division of the text in two sections that represent the two nights of the title: the former, entitled 'al-Ūlā' (the First), covers the night in Tunis in the first eight pages, the latter, entitled 'al-Thāniyah' (the Second), covers the night in Casablanca in the last three and a half pages. Apart from this, fragmentation and chaos reign. There is no linear succession of events. The narration, already in the past tense, is interspersed by analepses[373] that continuously interrupt the narration of the two meetings with Maḥmūd and Ḥāzim with details of the narrator's past life. The locales constantly shift from Lebanon to Morocco and Tunisia as the analepses require. Fragmentation and chaos are features not only of the *récit*,[374] but also of the protagonist/narrator's personality, despite the balanced and calm appearances she keeps for the first six and a half pages of this story, in which nevertheless there are some elements that suggest that her appearances are deceptive:

وأدهشني أن يحملق بي محمود وقد ظننته حازما وصدقت نفسي [375]

أحسست إني أغشى في الشوارع التونسية. [..] وبدا محمود مندهشا مما أبدو عليه. كنت أقفز في الحديث بين جغرافيات وتواريخ كثيرة : سألته عن حازم، ثم خمنت أنه حازم وقد تغير لأسباب عديدة [376]

The last two words of the first quote, which expresses her reaction to the chance meeting with Maḥmūd in the hotel hall, seem to indicate that in the narrator there is a sort of separate, irrational self that wants to believe that the man in front of her is Ḥāzim, while another, rational self knows that he is in fact Maḥmūd, addresses him as such, even recounts the myths heard in Beirut about his mysterious origins and activities,[377] while remaining calm. In the second quote instead the narrator's slightly altered state of mind already starts

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side and the national, the public and the Arab on the other side (ᶜĀshūr, Ghazūl, Rashīd [et al.] (eds.). *Op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 52-3).

[373] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, p. 82 for definition.

[374] *Ibid.* p. 71-2.

[375] 'It astonished me that Mahmūd was staring at me, I thought he was Hāzim and I believed myself'. Saᶜīd. *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

[376] 'I felt I was fainting in the streets of Tunis. [..] Mahmūd seemed dumbfounded at what I appeared to him. In the discourse I was jumping among many geographies and histories: I asked him about Hāzim, then I conjectured that he was Hāzim and that he had changed for many reasons'. *Ibid.* p. 31.

[377] *Ibid.* p. 29.

to seep through her calm appearances. She feels faint, her confused discourse now reflects the chaotic structure of the text itself by moving rapidly in space and time. She gives again the impression that there are a rational and an irrational self in action simultaneously: the former is conscious of Maḥmūd's astonishment and asks him about Ḥāzim, being aware that he is not Ḥāzim; the latter fantasises about Maḥmūd being Ḥāzim, although for the moment she still keeps her conjectures to herself. Maḥmūd's astonishment reveals that he has started to realise how she has changed since the time she lived in Beirut from several viewpoints: her state of mind is clearly altered, which might explain why he complies with her wish to call him only Ḥāzim; she looks less physically healthy because she is thin; she has abandoned Ḥāzim, Beirut and the Palestinian cause to move to Casablanca to work as a researcher, despite maintaining that all three were very dear to her.[378] When Maḥmūd starts harshly questioning her reasons for fleeing and reminds her the promises she had made at the time, which she seems to have forgotten, the construed unified appearance she had managed to keep until then crumbles under the weight of the past events, and probably also of her sense of guilt, that Maḥmūd has brought back to the present:

> ولا أدري لم غيرت نبرة صوتي فجأة ونقلت الحديث إلى حازم ورحت أحكي وأحكي وحازم يقترب ويملأ عيني ووجهي ولساني، وكانت رفقته في تلك الضاحية الجميلة البعيدة مستحيلا قد تحقق..[379]

The switch to another tone of voice and another topic subtly indicates another deeper change. Past memories are taking over the present and its inhabitants to transform them. The memory of Ḥāzim enwraps the protagonist so intensely that she can talk only about him (filled her tongue) and that she can see only him (filled her eyes and face), materialising in the person of Maḥmūd. While Maḥmūd is transformed into Ḥāzim the present protagonist is transformed too. From the past surfaces another protagonist, who lived happily in Beirut with her family and out of Ḥāzim's love and then lost everything to the war. It seems that she had tried forcefully to bury the other

[378] *Ibid.* pp. 32-4.

[379] 'I do not know why I suddenly changed my tone of voice, pushed the conversation towards Ḥāzim and I started talking and talking, and Ḥāzim came close to me and filled my eyes, my face, my tongue. His company in that beautiful far suburb was the impossible that had just come true..' *Ibid.* p. 34.

away when the situations she was situated in changed dramatically with the move to Casablanca, the job at the research centre, the distance from her family, her home country and her beloved, in an attempt to ease her suffering. However because *lived experience*, which is what forms subjectivity, for de Beauvoir is 'sedimented over time through [her] interactions with the world',[380] by cutting away the 'sediments' of the Lebanese period of her life the narrator is trying to cut away a portion of her subjectivity, albeit unsuccessfully. In the quotation above and in the subsequent description of her behaviour[381] the Lebanese 'sediments' are vehemently resurfacing, causing a schizophrenic split in her subjectivity between what I will call her 'past self', which is completely severed from her rationality, and her 'present self', which is still connected to her rationality. The narrator reveals herself as a fragmented subject caught in a spiral of hallucinations and glimpses of logic. While her 'past self' is convinced that her companion is Ḥāzim, her 'present self' questions this conviction and the identity of her companion, in a continuous alternation of the two selves that creates a deep disarray. Between the end of the seventh page and the end of section one the narrator changes her mind about her companion's identity several times. Her 'past self' wants him to be her beloved Ḥāzim, while her 'present self' knows that he is not, as it appears from the words that unwittingly escape her: 'Who is this Maḥmūd?.. I mean that one.. that whom I saw for the first time in the hotel's hall'.[382] By the end of the first section her 'past self' prevails and she doubts she ever met Maḥmūd, blaming her memory and the beautiful suburb for this,[383] convinced that her companion is Ḥāzim, whom she lets enter her hotel room. The first section of the story ends without further details.

A completing analepsis found at the beginning of section two informs us that this part of the narrative takes place more than a year later at night in the setting of the narrator's flat in Casablanca, hence indicating that between the two sections there is simultaneously an ellipsis and a paralipsis of the events

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[380] See Introduction p. 52 for full definition of *lived experience*.
[381] She takes Maḥmūd by the hand, wants him to chase her up the hill, calls him, etc. See Saʿīd. *Op. cit.*, p. 34.
[382] *Ibid.* p. 35.
[383] 'Did I know a man in Beirut whose name was Mahmūd?.'; 'This suburb does not support my memory'. *Ibid.* p. 35.

happened in the Tunisian hotel room.[384] The atmosphere of this second section is completely different from the one found in the first section. The very first line announces the protagonist's fear when someone knocks at her door late at night.[385] When she opens the door to someone she identifies as Maḥmūd through the spy-hole the dramatic tension starts to build up very quickly through two elements: the unusual attitude of the guest, who enters silently and looks around without greeting her; the accurate, intense recounting of his fast, contrasting, violent actions. Sa°īd skilfully employs the established technique of the intense recounting bordering dramatisation[386] to create a tangible dramatic tension that grows throughout the rest of the story, particularly when the alleged Maḥmūd aggressively asks what happened in the hotel in Tunis:

رأيتني أصرخ : — محمود.. عم تتحدث ؟ أية غرفة ؟ أي بلد ؟.. ماذا قال لك حازم ؟.. بماذا أخبرك حازم ؟.. هل هو الذي أرسلك الآن ؟ ولماذا لم يأت ؟ لماذا ؟...

رأيته يجن. يقفز ثم يقع ثم يحتدم ثم ينطفيء ثم يثور. يهب بجحوظ ويحشرج صوته :

— حازم ؟.. محمود ؟.. أية لعبة خطيرة تلعبين ؟ محمود ؟.. محمود ؟.. أنا محمود أنا ؟ أنا محمود ؟.[387]

From this moment onwards the narrator sees herself doing and saying things, just as she sees 'Maḥmūd' moving and talking, as if her present rational self dissociated from her body and watched from the outside the past irrational self calling the guest 'Maḥmūd', shouting at him, questioning him. The rapid sequence of actions (jumps up, falls down), particularly the image of

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[384] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, pp. 92-3 for definitions of completing analepsis, ellipsis and paralipsis.

[385] 'I went close to the door in fear.' Sa°īd. *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

[386] Charles May identifies this as one of the elements used to create dramatic tension, which is a feature of the short story since Edgar Allan Poe, in Charles E. May. *The Short Story: The Reality of Artifice*. (New York: Twayne Publishers; Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1995), pp. 119-20.

[387] 'I saw myself screaming: — Maḥmūd.. What are you talking about? What room? What country?.. What did Ḥāzim tell you?.. Of what did Ḥāzim inform you?.. Is it him who sent you now? And why did he not come? Why?...
I saw him going mad. He jumps up, then falls down, then burns, then dies out, then gets excited. He moves with his bulging eyes and his voice gasps:
Ḥāzim?.. Maḥmūd?.. What dangerous game are you playing at? Maḥmūd?.. Maḥmūd?.. Am I Maḥmūd I? Am I Maḥmūd?..' Sa°īd. *Op. cit.*, p. 36.

him burning and dying out like a flame, effectively conveys how rage for being called Maḥmūd gains a hold over the guest's body and mind. He considers this a dangerous game of hers and does not understand that she mistakes him for Maḥmūd because of her altered state of mind. He shows her plenty of documents and photos proving that he is Ḥāzim, including all the documents he had prepared so that they could get married, but she considers them counterfeited and informs him of her marriage with Ḥāzim in Tunis. At this he starts beating her, which increases the fragmentation between her selves even more:

جسدي يتفتت بين الكنبات. يداي شراع يسقط. كفي تدور
كطاحونة. رأيتني. هل رأيتني ؟ من هي التي وقعت ؟ بكت ؟ ناحت ؟
ضرب رأسها وانطوت ركبتاها عند بطنها كالجنين ؟ [..]
رأيته ينهار. كيف يمكنني أن أقول : «رأيته ينهار» ؟ [388]

This is a further step in the schizophrenic split in her subjectivity, which is so fractured that she cannot recognise herself in the beaten, crying woman, who seems an unknown stranger to her, from whom her present self is dissociated and whom it watches from the outside. She doubts the reliability of her visual perception of herself and her aggressor, hence presenting such perception as ambiguous and consequentially puts under discussion the knowledge deriving from it, an element that in the Chekhovian paradigm derives from its relativistic and impressionistic point of view. The combination of ambiguity of perception, fragmentation of the narrator's subjectivity and a narrative strategy that establishes the protagonist as the focal character in an autodiegetic *récit* with internal and fixed focalisation[389] (which means that there is no 'external authority' that can confirm or rebuff what she narrates) makes her appear a totally unreliable narrator.

Hence it is impossible to understand whether the moments her past self recalls while she is beaten are hallucinations of her past self, and hence part of the narrator's psychic reality, or memories of events belonging to an

[388] 'My body splinters among the sofas. My hands are a curtain that falls. My palm rotates like a mill. I saw myself. Did I see myself? Who is the woman who fell? Cried? Groaned? Whose head he hit and whose knees were bent to her belly like a foetus?' [..] I saw him collapsing. How can I say: «I saw him collapsing »?' *Ibid.* pp. 37-8.
[389] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, p. 252-3 for narrator's roles and pp. 206-7, 222 for focalisation.

external reality. Saʿīd renders the memories/hallucinations so realistically and concretely that it is very difficult to distinguish to which reality they belong. She creates a hazy mixture of psychic reality and external reality that is one of the features of the Chekhovian short story. The narration of her alleged wedding with Ḥāzim in Tunis is particularly ambiguous:

ليلتها، غادرنا الغرفة وبحثنا عن «المأذون». خرجنا من حكاية فيلم إلى شوارع تونس. عبرنا شارع الاستقلال وصحبنا صديق إلى مأذون يعرفه في نهج.. نهج.. نسيت !.. وزوجته نفسي..[390]

The narrator and her companion are presented as characters coming out of the fictionality of a film to search for a person authorised to celebrate their wedding in an avenue whose name she has forgotten. This combination makes the marriage appear another hallucination of her past self, which she believes to be true, just like she had believed without any proof that her Tunisian companion was Ḥāzim. Nevertheless she now refuses to believe that the man in front of her is Ḥāzim, despite all the documents he shows her, because her past self clings to the idea of the loving Ḥāzim she knew in Lebanon, unwilling to recognise him in this rabid beast with bulging eyes and foaming mouth.[391] By the end of the story the past irrational self has taken over completely, without any space left for rationality. She is lost in a delirium of blows and insults to Ḥāzim/Maḥmūd, fantasies about Ḥāzim's whereabouts, memories, in a fragmentation of subjectivity that nears madness.

The several switches from rational self to irrational self visible in this story recall the Foucauldian idea that the subject 'is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not above all and always identical to itself'.[392] In fact under the pressure of Maḥmūd's harsh interrogation in Tunis and of Ḥāzim's violence in Casablanca the protagonist takes an irrational form and establishes with herself a relation of dissociation that aim mainly at escaping such pressures and are different from the form and the relation she has when she is not under such pressures. Maḥmūd's harshness and Ḥāzim's violence are also clear

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[390] 'That night we left the room and we looked for «the *ma'dhūn*». We came out from the story of a film to the streets of Tunis. We crossed Independence Road with a friend that accompanied us to a *ma'dhūn* he knew in avenue.. avenue.. I forgot!.. and his wife is myself..' Saʿīd. *Op. cit.*, p. 37. A *ma'dhūn* is a person authorised to celebrate weddings.

[391] In *Ibid.* p. 38 he is described so and also as 'something I do not know'.

[392] See Introduction p. 33.

indicators of the kind of relationship they establish with the protagonist. They relegate her to the position of subjected subject and by so doing they prevent her from becoming a subject equal to them, because, as de Beauvoir states, without their recognition as subject she cannot possibly be a subject.[393]

From *Ḍarbat Qamar* I will scrutinise "Maqᶜad" (Seat), which I have selected because it shows how skin colour can be more important than sex in building the protagonist's sense of identity. The female protagonist's sexed body is constantly referred to through descriptions of her clothes, hair, complexion, make-up. Hence it could be said that the sex of her body is the background for all her acts, albeit, to paraphrase Toril Moi, in this story the most important fact about the protagonist's body[394] is skin colour rather than sex. When she fills in an application form in which she must indicate her racial origins her husband explains to her that the prospective employer needs to know her ethnic origin, not her colour, and thus she needs to tick the box corresponding to 'other', because none of the other boxes correspond to her ethnic origin. He provokes a strong reaction:

فقالت لا انا بيضاء وذكرته بشهر عسلهما في القاهرة عندما
قالوا لها في شارع الشواربي يا حلوة يا بيضة ، وذكرته بتونس عندما رثى السائق
لحالها وقال ان البيضاوات مثلها لا تتحمل بشراتهن الرقيقة لهب صفاقس ،
لكن سائق التاكسي كان أشد سمرة مني ، قال زوجها ، ولم ترد ان تسمعه .
وستظل لا تسمعه ولا تسمع الا ما تريد ، وما تريد ستتفاهم حوله مع مسؤولة
التوظيف في المتجر الجديد هذا اليوم . ستسألها ، بل ستخبرها عن اصول خدة
امها . الان بعد نصف ساعة ستصل وتجري لها المقابلة وسوف تنجح وتصبح
في قسم الحسابات وبين موظفات هذا المتجر الاضخم والاشهر . ستكون
بينهن ، مثلهن . لسن اكثر بياضا ولم يعدن اكثر شقرة فقد دفعت في الامس
ستين جنيها لتخضب خصلات من شعرها بمزيج من لوني الفضة والذهب .
اصبحت شقراء وستبقى على هذه الحال لثلاث سنوات على الاقل مع ان
العاملة قالت one year at least الا انها لا تعرف لون شعرها الاصلي فهو يميل
الى الشقرة وعلينا ان نصدق وعلى زوجها ان يصدق [395]

[393] See Introduction pp. 52.
[394] See *Ibid.* p. 49.
[395] 'She said: "No, I am white" and she reminded him of their honeymoon in Cairo, when in al-Shawāribī street they told her she was a beautiful white woman, and she reminded him of Tunisia, when the driver felt compassion for her state and said that the delicate complexion of

Unable to distinguish between skin colour and ethnicity, the protagonist refuses the idea of being anything else but white because since she was a child she has always been paler than the other girls, because taxi drivers and men in the streets of the Middle East considered her a white woman. Her consciousness has accepted her body as being white and the society she lived in had accepted it as white too, hence making of her body's whiteness part of her situatedness,[396] despite her being an ethnic Arab. A white, female, healthy, beautiful body is the protagonist's situation and it is through it that she has comprehended the world and herself for a good part of her life. In vain her husband tries to contextualise the Tunisian taxi driver's comment, noticing that he was so dark (darker than himself) that anybody else would have looked white to him, but the protagonist does not want to listen to him, not to anyone else who can contradict the image of herself as white.

She has already planned to tell the personnel manager who will interview her that her mother's grandmother was thought to be Italian to corroborate her white appearance, on which she has been working hard. She has dyed her hair blonde and uses an extremely white face powder in order to be as white and as blonde as her prospective work colleagues who, she is convinced, will accept her among them like one of them (i.e. a white woman). No one is allowed to challenge her conviction of being white and blonde, not even the hairdresser, whose opinion about the short duration of her blonde colour the protagonist contradicts reiterating that her hair tends towards blonde. The hair dresser is wrong, she will be blonde for much longer than a year.

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white women like her cannot tolerate the heat of Sfax. "But the taxi driver was darker than me" said her husband and she did not want to listen to him. She will continue not to listen to him and she will listen only to what she wants, and today she will agree on what she wants with the woman in charge of hiring personnel in the new shop. She will ask her, rather she will inform her of the origins of her mother's grandmother. Because in half an hour she will arrive, she will have an interview, she will be successful and she will find herself in the accounts section among the female employees of the greatest and most famous shop. She will be among them, like them. They are not whiter, nor blonder, since yesterday she spent sixty pounds to colour some locks of her hair with a mixture of silver and gold. She became blonde and she will remain such for three years at least, despite the fact that the hairdresser said: "One year at least". It is only that she does not know the original colour of her hair, which tends towards blonde, and we must believe her and her husband must believe her'. Hādiyā Sa^{c}īd. *Ḍarbat Qamar: Qiṣaṣ*. (Bayrūt: al-Mu'assasah al-^{c}Arabiyyah li-l-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1998), pp. 135-6.

[396] See Introduction p. 50 for de Beauvoir's comments about the body as part of a woman's situatedness.

The narrator subtly ridicules such conviction and reveals how unfounded it is at the end of the above quote by ironically imposing on her/himself, the protagonist's husband and the narratee a duty to believe the protagonist, who resists any different opinions on her whiteness and blondeness because her skin colour has always had a paramount importance in defining her identity since she was a child. Despite the fact that a woman's body does not suffice to define her, the body being for de Beauvoir only one of several situations all contributing to define a woman,[397] for the protagonist the situation body seems to prevail on all other situations in which she is singularly situated. In particular her complexion seems to be for her the most important fact about her body. She has built her identity around her whiteness. It is therefore of paramount importance for her to defend it against all divergent evidence in order not to lose a fundamental element of her identity, which here appears extremely arbitrary because it is invented by the self, as Foucault stated, around an element (her whiteness) whose existence is even disputed. The identity the protagonist has created for herself is also fixed, because she refuses to relinquish whiteness as a part of it even when, having migrated to the United Kingdom, she is no longer the whitest girl, and appears a limitation, as Foucault stated,[398] because she strives to conform to it against all evidence, falling into ridicule. The new society in which she lives does not accept her as white, hence her white body has no lived reality in the new environment. There are neither taxi drivers nor relatives here confirming her whiteness. On the contrary there are several elements conveying a certain sense of exclusion:

وترى اكثر العيون تتناءى عنها .
[..] فقد سبقوها الى المقاعد الاخرى وجلسوا ولم
يدعوا ، مثلما يحدث كل يوم ، اي مقعد خال يفصل بينهم كأنهم يصعدون
متلاصقين ، وعندما يؤم القطار محطتها وتصعد الى احدى عرباته ، تجد مقاعد
قليلة خالية ودائما بعيدة ، امامهم او وراءهم ، وليس بينهم [399]

[397] See *Ibid.* p. 49.
[398] All references to identity in this and the previous sentence can be found in *Ibid.* pp. 13-4.
[399] '[..] she sees most of the eyes avoiding her.
[..] they arrived at the other seats before her and sat without leaving any empty seat among them, as it happens every day. It is as if they board the train attached to each other, and when the train proceeds towards her station and she boards one of the carriages, she finds few empty seats and always far away, either in front or behind them, but not among them'. Saʿīd. *Ḍarbat Qamar,* p. 134.

Instead of attracting attention with her whiteness as it happened in Arab countries, now people's eyes avoid her and she feels isolated among them. Since a few lines above the narrator indicates that the only passengers who sit next to her seem to be non-white, I deduct that the passengers sitting close to each other and excluding her are white. The description of the seating strategies of those passengers (close proximity to each other, as to close ranks in front of the enemy, and distance from her) skilfully conveys the aloofness between the protagonist and the other passengers and the exclusion they operate on the protagonist. She hopes that one of the passengers sitting close together will make some space for her or that 'a certain someone' (probably a white person) will take the empty seat next to her, but this never happens.[400] She can find a place only away from those closed ranks, excluded from them despite her will to be part of them. She wishes to use her skin colour as an element of homogeneity among English people, but it remains the 'abnormality' it was already in Arab countries. In those countries though her complexion was an admired element of distinction, while in the United Kingdom it has turned into an identity that individualises her.[401] Hence also the very different culture/environment in which the protagonist now lives deems the situation body more important than all her other situations, and in particular deems her complexion a more important bodily fact than sex.

The last Hādiyā Saʿīd's short story I will close read is "Ḍarbat Qamar", of which I have selected a short extract because it illustrates further meanings and components of identity.

> ليس في لندن قمر . ولكن أنا رأيته . ماذا نعرف عندما نقول أنا؟ أنا عندما أقول أنا ، لا أعرفها ، لا أعرف نفسي ، رأيتها في الليل مثل ما رأيت القمر . فاجأتني وكان ذلك الرجل يوصلني .
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[400] *Ibid.* p. 135.
[401] See Introduction pp. 15, 21 for Foucauldian individualisation techniques.
[402] 'There is no moon in London. But I saw it. What do we know when we say 'I'? When I say 'I', I do not know it, I do not know my self, I saw it at night as I saw the moon. It [the self] surprised me while that man was accompanying me home.' Saʿīd. *Ḍarbat Qamar,* p. 15.

اقتربنا من حافة الجسر ، امام باحة الحانة وكان القمر فوق . رأيته ورأيتني برفقة الرجل وحيدين في الظلمة . هذا يعني اني حرة . الحرية هي أن يموت أهلك ، كلهم ، ويوصلك رجل غريب في بلد غريب الى بيتك . كيف وصل لأراه؟ أنا تركته في قريتنا في شمال العراق . في الوادي الصغير كنا وخلفنا الجبل . تركته فوق قبر أمي ، حفنة تراب كانت وتحتها اشلاء . المقاتلون قالوا صلوا لها بسرعة وامضوا . ظل القمر هناك مع رائحتها . يبدو انه لحق بي . [403]

The very first sentence of this short story with its untrue statement uses defamiliarisation, one of the favourite tools of the short story genre, to '[jolt] the reader out of his or her habitual ways of seeing the world'[404] by denying the existence in London of such a familiar sight. The negation transforms the moon from the placid and poetic image readers identify as familiar into a baffling unfamiliar object laden with meanings. The moon appears to bridge the two locales mentioned in the passage: the present urban setting of London and the past rural landscape of the village in northern Iraq. The move from the latter to the former has been more than a geographical relocation. The sentence 'freedom is that all your family dies and a male stranger accompanies you home in a foreign country' in fact conveys the idea that freedom for the protagonist entailed losing her family and leaving Iraqi society, which forced her to conform to their strict sexual segregation through control, and moving to a foreign country where she can walk at night with a man she barely knows without anybody noticing or judging her. These two geographical and metaphorical locations are connected by the moon, which I consider a symbol of the protagonist's rural past and communal identity that are absent in London. She naively believes to have purged both by leaving Iraq and does not seem to regret them, while she seems to prefer the London setting where she feels free because she can contradict her *Panoptical* society's norms.

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[403] 'We neared the bridge edge in front of the pub square and the moon was above. I saw it and I saw myself in the man's company, us two alone in the darkness. This means that I am free. Freedom is that all your family dies and a male stranger accompanies you home in a foreign country. How did it arrive so that I could see it? I left it in our village in northern Iraq. We were in the little wādī with the mountain behind us. I left it on my mother's tomb, a handful of soil with dismembered limbs underneath it. The fighters said: "Pray for her quickly and go away." The moon remained there with her smell. It seems that it has followed me.' *Ibid.* pp. 15-6.

[404] Laura Castor. 'Making the Familiar Strange' in Winther, Lothe, and Skei (eds.). *The Art of Brevity,* p. 138; [jolt] replaces 'jolts'.

Therefore the foreign city represents a liberating experience for the protagonist, as Samira Aghacy maintains, an opportunity to escape familial, rural and national traditions, taboos, beliefs that she at least partially rejects since she contradicts sexual segregation, which is often the case in Lebanese fiction after 1975.[405] The protagonist's rejection of the communal identity seems to have engendered a subjective crisis ('I do not know my self') until the night in which she realises for the first time that the normalised Iraqi identity she believed to have left on her mother's grave has followed her, because she has interiorised it. It is when she realises this that she sees her self ('I saw it [the self] at night as I saw the moon') and that she notices to be in a male stranger's company ('I saw it [the moon] and I saw myself in the man's company'). She hence confirms Aghacy's observation that even women who take the distance from their rural past and live in the city are haunted by their past and cannot leave it behind completely.[406] However the consciousness that she is not free from her communal identity as she thought and that she does not know her self does not prevent her from resisting her Iraqi identity's norms by kissing her escort.[407] This gesture indicates that she is not 'the principle of [her] own subjection'[408] because once away from her Panoptical society's gaze she is capable to disobey.

To conclude, the researcher and the Iraqi immigrant are Hamlets, 'thinkers, [who] merely sit back and monologize',[409] always engrossed in their thoughts, partially or completely despondent for spiritual considerations. The former is a successful professional, although she is forlorn in her solitary private world, away from all her dear ones. The latter is overburdened by the sad memories of her past and by her subjective crisis. The second protagonist is more an outcast than a Hamlet, because she suffers from being excluded by the white community of which she strongly wishes to be part. In the stories

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[405] Aghacy, Samira. 'Lebanese Women's Fiction: Urban Identity and the Tyranny of the Past', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 33:4, (November 2001), p. 504.
[406] *Ibid.* p. 512.
[407] Saʿīd. *Ḍarbat Qamar,* p. 16.
[408] Foucault's words; see Introduction p. 21.
[409] O'Connor. *Op. cit.,* p. 25. I have used the sentence in the plural rather than in the singular of the original and added [who].

they express the different experiences indicated by Hafez:[410] the researcher's dramatic fragmentation; the effort of subjectivation of the Iraqi immigrant, rejecting her inherited identity for a chosen identity; the second protagonist's imposed distinction (not need of distinction) from the community, which marks her out through individualisation.

The latter is the only protagonist of the three that is not an autodiegetic narrator,[411] a narrative strategy that further accentuate her social exclusion. At the same time she is the only protagonist that has two well defined and fixed identities: the white one she constructs for herself and the non-white one through which English commuters individualise her. Hence she results simultaneously a 'subject attached to [her] own identity by the consciousness or knowledge of [her] self' and a 'subject subdued to the other by control'.[412] The first protagonist instead has abandoned her self to fragmentation, letting a schizophrenic split make her impotent in front of Ḥāzim and Maḥmūd and subdued to them by control, because she has no coherent subjectivity on which to found agency.[413] The third protagonist is a 'becoming'.[414] She once was a woman 'subdued to the other by control', where 'the other' was her family and Iraqi rural society that forced her to share a communal identity. Once away from 'the other' she rejects the imposed communal identity and loses certainty about her own subjectivity,[415] hence becoming a resisting vacillating subject who nevertheless now enjoys the freedom and agency of which 'the other' had deprived her in the past.

3) Liyānah Badr

Liyānah Badr was born in Jerusalem in 1951/2, grew up in Jericho, and then moved to Jordan in 1967 with her family. She studied for some time at the

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[410] See pp. 58-9 above.
[411] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, p. 253 for definition.
[412] Foucauldian definitions of subject; see Introduction p. 12; [her] replaces 'his'.
[413] See *Ibid.* p. 44 for Foucault's consideration about coherent subjectivities necessary to found political action.
[414] See *Ibid.* p. 53 for this definition shared by de Beauvoir and Foucault.
[415] This is a consequence of the rejection of prescriptive subjectivities; see *Ibid.* p. 45.

University of Jordan but, having moved to Beirut after the events of Black September (1970), obtained her degree in philosophy and psychology in 1973 at the Arab University of Beirut and her MA in psychology in 1975 at the University of Lebanon.[416] She has worked as a journalist for the magazine *Al-Ḥurriyyah* in Beirut, Damascus and Tunis. In the second half of the 1990's she returned to Palestine, settling in Rāmallah, has worked for the magazine *Dafātir Filasṭīniyyah* and now works for the Ministry of Culture as director of the cinema section, a position that induced her to study and practise direction and script writing, adding several films to her literary production that encompasses novels, short stories, children's stories and dramas, poetry.[417]

As is the case with the previous two writers, critical works on Badr's other works are several, while those on short stories are very few. One of the latter is Khālidah Saʿīd's study that explains how Badr uses imagination and probable dreams to bridge the gap between 'the possible imaginary' and 'the real certain' and how she builds her stories on the different interactions between the two levels of daily public life and imaginary private life.[418] A certain difference in themes can be seen among the collections Badr wrote while living outside Palestine, such as *Anā Urīdu al-Nahār* (I Want the Daylight) and *Jaḥīm Dhahabī* (Golden Hellfire), and the collection she wrote after her return *Samā' Wāḥidah* (One Sky). The most recurring theme in the *Anā Urīdu al-Nahār* is the loss of dear ones, home countries, peace, caused by war, displacement and life choices, accompanied by some examples of unbalanced and discordant romantic relations. In *Jaḥīm Dhahabī* the main themes are Palestinians' sorrowful exile in unwelcoming countries and the wars that affected Palestine, Lebanon and Kuwait. In both collections female and child characters prevail on rare male characters. *Samā' Wāḥidah* instead is dominated by the tragedy of the occupation and Israelis' influence on the

[416] For more details about Badr's formative years see John J. Donohue and Leslie Tramontini (eds.). *Crosshatching in Global Culture: a Dictionary of Modern Arab Writers: an Updated English Version of R. B. Campbell's "Contemporary Arab Writers"*. (Beirut: Ergon Verlag Würzburg, 2004), vol.1, pp. 193-5.
[417] See bibliography for details.
[418] Khālidah Saʿīd. *Al-Mar'ah, al-Taḥarrur, al-Ibdāʿ*. (Al-Dār al-Bayḍā': Nashr al-Fanak), 1991, pp. 149-50. The only other study I could trace about Badr's older short stories is a comment about "Alwān" (from *Jaḥīm Dhahabī*) in al-Zayyāt. *Op. cit.*, p. 28. Instead there are at least seven articles about *Samā' Wāḥidah* available on the internet.

daily life of its common Palestinian protagonists, which is a common tendency among Palestinian writers living in the Occupied Territories.[419]

From *Anā Urīdu al-Nahār* I have chosen "Anā Urīdu al-Nahār" because it concentrates on the disturbed inner world of the young female protagonist and on her problematic interactions with men and with others in general, hence providing an insight into her subjectivity's formative elements. The protagonist introduces her problems to relate to her two partners[420] on the background of intersexual relations that are changing more in theory than in practice:

ويرجع
اليها قائلا : لن أحبك اذا جعلتِني حبة من المسبحة التي تحملينها بين يديك ثم تفرطينها متى تشائين . لا تعرف أن تجيبه ، ماذا تقول له ؟. لكن ذلك كان قبل أن تعرفه ، حتا قبل ان تعرفه . جميعهم كانوا يتشدقون بألفاظ كبيرة حول حرية المرأة ، فاذا ما استرخت بين أيديهم ، امتدت الكلمات انشوطة حول عنقها في حلقة تصغر ، وتصغر الى أن تخنقها الاشاعات وحكايا الاصدقاء ، ونحن لم نصبح بعد في المجتمع الجديد . ثم فتاة غير رصينة ، وفي مثل هذا السن ! شيء غير معقول . الحرية للكبار وحدهم ، وهذه ماذا تفهم من الحياة ؟؟

أحكي له ، أقول : في المرة الاخيرة تخانقتُ مع صديقي ، ورفضت أن أقابله . [..] حضر الى منزل الناس الذين أقيمُ عندهم وهددني بصوته العالي وكأنه كان يريدهم أن يسمعوه . كان ذلك يشبه الفضيحة حتا .[421]

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[419] See pp. 76-86 above for the Levantine literary context.

[420] The first partner is an amateur painter; the second partner is simply called 'my beloved'.

[421] '[..] he [her second partner] returns to her saying: "I will not love you if you make me a bead of the rosary that you carry in your hands and then detach when you wish." She does not know what to answer him, what does she tell him? But this was before she knew him, absolutely before she knew him. All of them were making great bombastic enunciations about women's freedom, but every time she relaxed between their hands the words tied a noose around her neck in the shape of a circle that became smaller and smaller until the rumours and the friends' stories suffocated her, and we did not find ourselves anymore in a new society. Then a girl not poised, and at this age! An illogical thing. Freedom is only for adults, what does she understand of freedom??
I talk to him, I say: "Last time I have quarrelled with my friend [the painter], and I refused to meet him. [..] He turned up at the house of the people with whom I was living and he threatened me with a loud voice as if he wanted them to hear him. That definitely resembled scandal.' Liyānah Badr. *Anā Urīdu al-Nahār: Qiṣaṣ*. (Al-Lādhiqiyyah: Dār al-Ḥiwār li-l-Nashr wa al-Tawzīᶜ, 1985), p. 60.

The protagonist finds herself caught between what men say about women's freedom and the behaviour they expect from her, which are contradictory. As soon as she begins taking advantage of the freedom men are pompously bestowing on women, gossips about her create an atmosphere that suffocates her exercise of freedom rather than encouraging it. This happens because she is singularly situated in a sort of schizoid society that falsely pretends to be a new society in which freedom can be enjoyed, while it expects her to conform to its traditional idea of femininity and punishes her when she does not, in line with de Beauvoir's idea that the concept of femininity is defined by customs and fashions and imposes itself on women who are sexually and socially devalued if they do not conform.[422] The punishment is epitomised in: her actual partner's threat not to love her if she treats him like 'a bead of the rosary', i.e. like an object; people's remarks about her, who is deemed too old to be 'not poised', i.e. unruly as a child, and too young to 'understand freedom', i.e. to be considered a responsible subject; the humiliation to which she is subjected when her male friend threatens her loudly in order to be heard by her house mates because she refused to met him after a quarrel. These are disciplinary sanctions, or rather a disciplinary preventative measure in the first case, because all three actions strike the protagonist when she exerts her agency of subject or try to prevent her from doing so. They aim to push her back into the position of passive object society assigned to her and ultimately to normalise her, showing the typical characteristic of discipline that punishes 'all that is inadequate to the rule', as Foucault indicated.[423] By confining her to the position of normalised passive object these three sanctions indicate to the protagonist that freedom and agency for her are abstract ideas with which she can toy only. She will not be allowed to employ them to overcome her subordination in the unequal relations in which she is involved, because these are fundamental in enabling her counterparts to exert power on her.[424] In fact despite her aspirations she is still inhabiting an inferior position, which is visible in her lack of response to the

[422] See Introduction pp. 50-1.
[423] *Ibid.* p. 21.
[424] As per Foucault's definition power is exerted in unequal relations; see *Ibid.* p. 17.

three sanctions: she does not know what to answer her second partner, she does not defend herself from people's comments and she does not react to the humiliation inflicted by the painter. Similarly she does not respond to the silencing disgust, disinterest, disesteem and belittling laughs of her actual partner when she starts to recount her relationship with the painter and her suicide attempt.[425] In all the aforesaid situations she lets her counterpart tie her to her inferior position without opposing resistance, unless her suicide attempt is considered a form of resistance. Hence she cooperates in maintaining her own subordination because she normalises herself to the image of women as weak that her culture has defined and that she has interiorised,[426] while pretending to be strong. This contradiction governs her erratic behaviours and her relationship with the painter:

> وانا اختبيء داخل
> جسده الممتد فوقي . الغثيان ! أشعر به يفور داخل معدتي المبطنة
> بأعشاب البحر ، وأحاول أن أقاوم . بلى ، يجب أن أقاوم ،
> فالغثيان إحساس مرهق ورديء ، ولا يناسب من كان له شعر
> الصبيان مثلي . وماذا أفعل ؟ هل أبكي كما يفعلون في الافلام
> المصرية .[427]

She cannot face the painter 'unique and sovereign' as a subject, because the education received has prepared her only for being an inessential object that loses 'herself body and soul in the one designated to her as the absolute, as the essential',[428] hence her desire to hide in his body. Her ambivalent attitude towards nausea illustrates the aforesaid contradiction. She wishes to resist nausea because she wants to abide by the sexist ideology of patriarchy that obliges her to forget her femininity if she wants to be equal to men,[429] epitomes of strength. Simultaneously she contemplates the possibility to surrender to tears, conforming to the socially accepted image of women as

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[425] Badr. *Op. cit.,* p. 61.
[426] This is the relationship of complicity women develop with the femininity norms of their own cultures as indicated by Bordo; see Introduction p. 39.
[427] '..and I hide inside his body lying above me. The nausea! I feel it gushing in my stomach full of seaweeds and I try to resist. Or rather I must resist, since nausea is an oppressing bad sensation, and it does not suit someone with a boy haircut like me. What do I do? Do I cry like they do in Egyptian films?' Badr. *Op. cit.,* p. 63.
[428] De Beauvoir's words; see Introduction p. 53.
[429] This aspect is analysed by de Beauvoir; see *Ibid.* p. 49.

tearful and 'femininely' weak, typical of Egyptian films.[430] She has unconsciously interiorised these conceptions of femininity and masculinity and more:

[..] وهو يضحك من
الطريقة التي أعبر بها عن مشاعري . طبعا ، هكذا كان يجب أن
أحكي من البداية . ألم تحك حواء هكذا مع سيدنا آدم بعد أن طردا
من الجنة ؟ [431]

In this quote Eve is the rebellious female archetype she has internalised, that compels her to verbalise thoughts and feelings ('this was the way I had to talk') that are traditionally attributed to Eve in order to comply with her socially accepted image. Thus she appears completely and uncritically dependent on social archetypes, unable to build a subjectivity with a 'personal touch'. However even when she tries to be Eve her present partner laughs at her, ridiculing the way she expresses her feelings, despite the fact that she is trying to recount a painful life experience, once again belittling her because he does not consider her an adult subject but just a stupid, inferior little girl.[432]

Therefore the two main elements that condition subjectivation for de Beauvoir, i.e. social customs and other subjects, are cooperating in hampering the protagonist's subjectivation. The former mythifies her and the latter deprives her of the recognition as subject, without which she cannot possibly be a subject, and of the intersubjective reciprocal relationship between equals required for the formation of subjectivity.[433]

She reacts to mythification and objectification by foregrounding her body:

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[430] Throughout the story her partner is a 'courageous hero' (mentioned three times on p. 62), a 'heroic and strong man', 'the capable great man' (p. 63), while she is a 'weak girl' (p. 62).
[431] [..] and he laughs of the way in which I express my feelings. Of course, this was the way I had to talk from the beginning. Did Eve not talk like this with our lord Adam after they were expelled from Paradise?' Badr. *Op. cit.*, p. 65.
[432] *Ibid.* p. 59.
[433] See Introduction p. 52.

وأخرج نهدي الى
الهواء والنور ، وألاحظ كم هو فاتح لون الحَلَمَة . بياض وردي
مرشوم بنمشات صغيرة سوداء يذكرني بشيء غريب ملتبس بين
الفتيات والامهات . الحَلَمَة ! يا للكلمة البغيضة . أف ! انها
تذكرني بالرضعات تواً . كلمة بغيضة ممنوعة من الصرف ،
والتداول أو الاستعمال . هم علمونا هكذا . من هم ؟ الذين
علمونا الاحرف الأبجدية . الأهل . الاقارب . الاعمام .
الخالات . الاصدقاء ، وأصدقاء الاصدقاء .[434]

Exposing her breasts to the light she notices the colour of her nipples as if she had never seen them before in full light, since living in a social context in which even the use of the word nipple is forbidden has prevented her from becoming truly familiar with her own sexed body. Such prohibition is an allusion to the suppression of any discussion about female sexuality that has been imposed on 'us' ('They taught us so.'), i.e. women in general, by teachers, family, relatives, friends, all involved in teaching those women 'feminine proprieties', which are that discipline of femaleness society employs to fabricate women.[435] The protagonist's physical gesture of exposure has three implications: she defies the secrecy forced on female sexuality and on the female body by her society; she resists the power that her social entourage exercises on her body through constant surveillance and she fully enjoys 'the pleasure of relaxing in silence' with her body in the sun and the air;[436] she takes full control of her body and of her subjectivity inseparable from her body. In this passage her subjectivity does not appear as an instrument of her entourage's power because it is not assisting their exercise of power,[437] which means that she has not fully interiorised the norm and that her body has become a locus of resistance for a moment, rather than an instrument of power. Nevertheless as soon as she hears her partner coming

[434] 'I expose my breasts to the air and the light, and I notice how light the colour of the nipple is. Pinkish white with black little freckles, it reminds me of a strange ambiguous thing between girls and mothers. The nipple! What a hateful word. Uf! It reminds me immediately of wet nurses. Hateful word forbidden to decline, circulate and use. They taught us so. Who are they? Those who taught us the letters of the alphabet. The family. The neighbours. The uncles. The aunts. The friends and friends of the friends.' Badr. *Op. cit.*, p. 67.
[435] As per Foucault 'discipline «fabricates» individuals'; see Introduction p. 20.
[436] Badr. *Op. cit.*, p. 67.
[437] See Introduction p.19 for subjectivity as product and instrument of power.

out of the bathroom she covers up, losing control of more than her body in favour of her overseer:

وأقذف بحبات الكهرمان على الارض ناسية من أنا ومن اكون ؟ [438]

When she loses mastery on her body she forgets who she is and will be, i.e. she loses control of her subjectivity too. The image of the rosary beads, recurrent in this short story,[439] might suggest also another interpretation. By looking at the different usages of this image and at the recurrent childhood memories scattered in this story, I came to the conclusion that it symbolizes the protagonist's *lived experience* that has sedimented through the chain of interactions with her world and has formed her subjectivity.[440] The gesture of scattering the beads symbolises the undoing of her *lived experience*, which causes also the undoing of her present and future subjectivity. In the resulting vacuum she could form another subjectivity, remote from archetypes and object position, of which one characteristic is declared in the story's coda:

أنا أريد النهار . [441]

The protagonist's need of light is reiterated in this story,[442] possibly suggesting the transparent, open and unique subjectivity she would like to constitute personally, distinguished from the secretive, confined and controlled subjectivity her society has fabricated in her. Such desire could be the probable dream with which Badr bridges the gap between 'the possible imaginary' subject position to which the protagonist aspires and 'the real certain' object position she occupies.[443] Nevertheless this does not prevent the protagonist from being the autodiegetic narrator of the entire thirteen-page story,[444] which is peculiarly written almost completely in the present tense, even when the protagonist is narrating moments of her childhood or of her more recent past through the extensive and frequent analepses[445] that intersperse the récit. The constant use of the present tense and the lack of

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[438] 'I throw the amber beads on the floor, forgetting who am I and who will I be?' Badr. *Op. cit.*, p. 68.
[439] *Ibid.* pp. 60, 65, 68.
[440] See Introduction p. 52 for de Beauvoi's definition of *lived experience*.
[441] 'I want daylight.' Badr. *Op. cit.*, p. 69.
[442] It is found also on pp. 67, 68.
[443] I am using Sa°īd's terminology; see above p. 134.
[444] The only exception is half a page quoted on p. 135 above.
[445] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, pp. 253,82 for definitions of autodiegetic and analepsis.

temporal clauses and adverbs make the switch between present and past events nearly imperceptible, creating a sort of continuum in which all events are lived as present by the protagonist.

From *Jaḥīm Dhahabī* I will examine "Liqā'" (Encounter), which I have chosen because it presents the roles of communities and of the body in the protagonist's subjectivity. The protagonist is a very young expectant Palestinian woman living in Jordan who, apart from being a member of the Palestinian exiles' community, is also an activist of a Palestinian resistance movement based in Jordan. She and other women activists carry out the risky operation of bringing messages to the fedayeen situated in the Jerash refugee camp every week, until her pregnancy noticeably alters her body's shape.

> بطنك يصل إلى حلقك وتودّين الصعود إلى
> الأحراش في هذه الحالة! . وماذا فيها؟ كانت تسألهم بعناد وتصميم.
> ولمَ لا؟ إنني أشارك هنا في جميع العمليات السريّة التي أقدر عليها. ألم
> أضع كومة المنشورات الحزبية الممنوعة وأجُلّ بها ملفوفة بأمان تام
> فوق بطني الذي يصل إلى حلقي كما تقولون؟ ألم أعبر عشرات
> الحواجز الخطرة بكفاءة عجز عنها عتاة الأبطال الذين لا يملكون بطناً
> ولا ما يحزنون؟.[446]

Her political group is now averse to her participation in the mission to Jerash because the transformation of her body caused by her advanced pregnancy has changed her comrades' perception of her. Since the body is one of the situations that contribute to define her as a woman, its changes affect her definition. In this case it is the shape/size rather than the sex of the body that is the most important fact about the protagonist's body, as Toril Moi would put it.[447] Nevertheless the protagonist stubbornly and resolutely denies that the change in shape has negatively affected the ability she has already demonstrated in previous dangerous missions accomplished with her oversize belly. On the contrary she underlines how to perform missions with the

[446] 'Your belly is up to your throat and you would like to climb up to the forests in this state! "What is strange in this?" she asked with stubbornness and resoluteness. "Why not? I participate in all secret operations that I am able to do. Did I not put a heap of forbidden party leaflets and walk around in all safety with them wrapped over my belly that is up to my throat, as you say? Did I not overcome tens of dangerous obstacles with an ability that is lacking in the presumptuous heroes who have no belly and are not saddened by it?' Liyānah Badr. *Jaḥīm Dhahabī: Qiṣaṣ.* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ādāb, 1991), p. 24.

[447] See Introduction p. 49.

saddening burden of her belly requires more ability than her male comrades will ever have. She successfully defeats this attempt to exclude her and goes to Jerash, but once there a man she finds in the deserted refugee camp hinders her plan to reach the fedayeen on the mountains:

ينظر إلى بطنها المتمدّد إلى معدتها
حسبما وصفه. عرفها منذ دقائق ولكنه صار يتكلّم معها مثل جميع
الذين تعرفهم، يخاطبونها بمفردات طفلة عنيدة تريد أن تتشاقى.[..]
يسحبها من يدها كما لو أنه عمّها أو خالها إلى غرفة منزوية جلس
بداخلها شخص غريب آخر لا تعرفه، هذا هو مكتبكم، سلّمي
الأغراض وعودي إلى البيت فوراً. [448]

With the sentence 'according to his description' the narrator introduces a glimpse of the man's unvoiced viewpoint on the protagonist's tummy, which influences his attitude towards the protagonist more than her sex. He talks to her as if talking to a stubborn little girl, whom he drags by the hand and commands in the imperative tense to leave her stuff and go home, as if pregnancy had diminished her decisional faculties, hence entitling him to treat her like his niece. This attitude is common to all the people she knows, as though the body shape change caused by pregnancy had altered their perception of her from an able-bodied woman to a disabled that is automatically placed in an inferior position in their power relations. Her stubbornness, which is a form of resistance, is used by power as evidence of her unreasonableness in order to further dominate as Foucault theorised.[449] The activist's own attitude towards pregnancy and her baby is problematic:

الحب رومانتيكي وعظيم. لكن الحبَل! يا ويلي، شهادة سافرة على
التحقّق الجسماني المريب لفعل المضاجعة. شيء كالجريمة![..]
لكن مضاجعة الحب شيء، ومضاجعة تخليف الأطفال شيء آخر.
الثانية تجعلني أشبه بأمّي، أكبر مما أنا، وبما أودّ أن أكون. [450]

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[448] 'He looks at her belly extending to her stomach according to his description. He has known her for minutes, but he starts speaking to her like all the people whom she knows, who talk to her with the vocabulary of a stubborn little girl that wants to be bad mannered. [..]
As if he was her paternal or maternal uncle, he drags her by the hand to a remote room in which sits another strange guy she does not know. "This is your office, leave your stuff and go back home immediately."' Badr. *Jaḥīm Dhahabī*, p. 26.

[449] See Introduction p. 17.

[450] 'Love is romantic and great. But pregnancy! Poor me! A glaring evidence of the corporeal suspicious occurrence of the sexual intercourse. A bit like a crime! [..] But intercourse for love

Although she differentiates between sexual intercourse motivated by love, which she considers 'romantic and great', and that motivated by reproduction, there is an undercurrent of shamefulness in these lines, since she compares pregnancy to the evidence of a crime and she calls sexual intercourse 'suspicious' and similar to a crime. This shame, together with other details, like her boyish haircut and her 'unfeminine' activities (jumping walls, running, climbing),[451] gives the impression that the protagonist is trying to repudiate her femaleness and to masculinise herself. By so doing she mutilates her subjectivity,[452] replacing her renounced femaleness with her political identity, which hence is extremely precious. Pregnancy instead foregrounds her femaleness, and she seems to dislike being a female and even more to be pregnant because of its consequences. She is saddened by her belly.[453] She abhors the 'unnatural' size of her belly and the 'bizarre' shape[454] pregnancy has given her once slim body; the similarity to her mother, whom she does not wish to emulate, probably identifying her as the archetypical Woman/Mother; the restlessness of the foetus she is carrying:

حتى الطفل! تصوّر، لا يريد أن
يهدأ كلما استسلمت إلى النوم، يظلّ يرفسني الملعون وكأنه في مملكته
المستقلّة وليس داخل جوفي. يا إلهي حتى الأطفال الذين بحجم
الكفّ ينالون استقلالهم وهم ما زالوا نطفاً جدّ صغيرة. لو كان
يسمعني على الأقل ليهدأ ويكنّ خلال هنيهات نومي. [455]

The use of the attribute 'damned' clearly indicates her exasperation in front of this child, whom she considers an 'invader' of her personal space and a limit to her freedom, because he behaves as if he was living in his own independent space rather than in his mother's womb, depriving her of calm, sleep and independence. It is also possible that Badr might be using the child

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is one thing, and intercourse for generating children is something else. The latter makes me resemble my mother, older than I am and than I wish to be.' Badr. *Jaḥīm Dhahabī,* p. 21.

[451] Activities mention in *Ibid.* p. 26.

[452] See Introduction p. 48 for de Beauvoir's concept of femininity denial as mutilation.

[453] See quote 446 on p. 141 above.

[454] See Badr. *Jaḥīm Dhahabī,* p. 27 for the former, p. 24 for the latter.

[455] 'Even the child! Imagine, he does not want to calm down every time I give in to sleep, and the damned child keeps kicking me as if he is in his independent kingdom and not inside my tummy. Oh my God, even children the size of a palm of the hand obtain their independence and they are still very small drops. If he listened to me at least he would calm down and be appeased during my little sleep.' *Ibid.* p. 24.

as a metaphor of the Zionist invader and the protagonist's body as the allegory of Palestine, hence the word 'damned' and the representation of the mother-child relationship as a competition to acquire independence at the other's expenses.

Despite the fact that the change of body shape has affected everybody's perception of the protagonist and despite the protagonist's problematic attitude towards pregnancy and her baby, her own perception of herself is intact until she finds herself stranded in Jerash refugee camp:

> وللمرّة الأولى داهمها وعي غامض بأن جسدها أثقل منها. إنه يقودها ويحدّد مساراتها، وليس العكس. قبلها لم تكن تكترث لو ركضت في فناء الجامعة بين الطلبة [..]
> شكلها وحده تغيّر لا أكثر ولا أقل. تخرج في المظاهرات وتسير مسافات طويلة وهي تهتف مع النساء وبنات المدارس، وتقفز عن الجدران لو تطلّب الأمر وفتحت عليهم قوات الجيش الرشاشات. أمّا الآن! أمّا الآن!!.
> 456

Until that moment she had been naively certain that only her body shape had changed, hence she could still run and jump as usual even in the last month of her pregnancy. Now that she is alone in a hot, deserted refugee camp the protagonist realises for the first time that also her body's mobility and her control over it have changed. The advanced pregnancy prevents her body from being as mobile as it was before, considerably limiting the kind of activities it is able to do, regardless of what she wants to do, which means that now it is her body that controls her rather than the contrary. It is only when she realises personally how limited her pregnant feminine body's mobility is, i.e. when her consciousness accepts it through her actions, that it becomes part of her situatedness.[457]

In particular she discovers how defenceless she is when a sniper starts shooting at her:

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[456] 'For the first time she was struck by the unfathomable awareness that her body is heavier than her. It is what guides her and delimitates her trajectories, not the contrary. Before that she did not worry about running in the university courtyard among the students [..]
Only her shape changed, no more, no less. She goes to demonstrations, she walks long distances, she shouts with women and schoolgirls, she jumps over walls if the situation requires it and if the army opens fire on them. But now! But now!!' *Ibid.* p. 26.

[457] I am paraphrasing de Beauvoir; see Introduction p. 50.

تخفض رأسها بأكثر ما تستطيع، لولا هذا الكرش غير الطبيعي الذي يتسلّق معدتها، تدفع جسدها إلى الأمام كي تركض، لكنها تكتشف أن هذه الحركة البسيطة لم تعد ملك يديها. كأن جسدها المنهمك في صناعة الطفل نسيها وتخلّى عنها. حتى الركض! لا يمكن!!

458

The protagonist resents pregnancy for absorbing most of her vital energy and depriving her of control over her body, which now cannot even duck for cover or run to escape the sniper. She also resents her body for neglecting her and privileging the necessities of her foetus, whom she sees as having more mastery than her on her body and hence depriving her subjectivity, which is not separated from the body, of its vital space. In this case rather than being subjectivity the 'prison of the body', as Foucault defined it,[459] it is the body that imprisons the protagonist's subjectivity by subduing it to reproductive needs even against its own survival needs. This confirms de Beauvoir's definition of biological facts as extremely important and of a woman's body as 'one of the essential elements of the situation that she occupies in this world'.[460]

After this scary experience, the protagonist is brought to safety by a group of Palestinian women wearing 'black peasant clothes that preserved the wonderful embroidery since the days of «the country»'.[461] They shout at her to jump in the already overcrowded car, accustomed as they are to a lifestyle that has only a communal dimension, in which everything positive and negative is shared and there is no metaphorical and physical space for the individual. By presenting the protagonist (a well-off university student, modernly dresses, living in an urban context) boarding a car full of refugees (impoverished, poorly educated or illiterate, traditionally dressed, of peasant extraction) Badr gives this collective Palestinian identity an inclusive character. Nevertheless she does not construct a harmonic community, which is out of place in the short

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458 'She lowers her head as much as she can, considering this unnatural abdomen that climbs to her stomach, she pushes her body forward in order to run, but she finds out that this simple movement is out of her reach now. As if her body, entirely devoted to the production of the child, had forgotten and neglected her. Even running is not possible!!' Badr. *Jaḥīm Dhahabī,* p. 27.

459 See Introduction p. 19 for the relation body/subjectivity.

460 *Ibid.* p. 48.

461 Badr. *Jaḥīm Dhahabī,* p. 29.

story as Hafez indicated.[462] The conflictuality present within the Palestinian community transpires in the words the protagonist mentally addresses to her teacher when he criticises her for being pregnant at such a young age:

> إننا الثورة بذاتها. نعم، نحن. على كل شيء. هزيمة حرب حزيران ١٩٦٧. الأعراف القديمة، والتقاليد البالية. حتى على أهلنا الذين يقاومون الحب بأشدّ مما يكافحون الامبريالية والرأسمالية. وأنا يا أستاذ، أحببته، وتزوّجته وأنا طفلة كما تقول لأنني أريد أن أكون. نحن. نحن الثورة في المجتمع الجديد كما قلت لك.[463]

The revolution she believes young Palestinians embody does not fight only the enemies of Palestine, but also enslaving Palestinian traditions and social practices in order to renew Palestinian society. In a context in which people thwart love in the choice of a spouse more than they fight imperialism and capitalism, she decided to marry the man she loves. This is a form of rebellion to the norm, and the couple born out of this rebellious gesture is for her a form of revolution that will renew society, because she attributes revolutionary potential to the management of intersexual relationships. The protagonist's position, although excessively optimistic, recalls the early Women's Liberation movement's motto "personal is political" and indeed the Foucauldian idea that just like power affects all institutions without being localised in them, so there are many loci of resistance.[464] The protagonist is deliberately resisting power when she delivers secret messages for her political group, when she takes the distance from worn traditions, when she marries the man she loves.

To conclude, the protagonists of these two short stories have diametrically opposed relations with their female bodies. The former foregrounds her female body in order to resist her social entourage's power. The latter denies the femaleness of her body, until her body overwhelms her

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[462] See Introduction p. 57.
[463] 'We are the revolution itself. Yes, us. Against everything. The June 1967 defeat. The old conventions, the worn traditions. Even against our people who resist love more than they fight imperialism and capitalism. Me, sir, I fell in love with him and I married him when I was a child, as you say, because I want to be. Us. We are the revolution in the new society as I told you.' Badr. *Jaḥīm Dhahabī,* p. 21.
[464] See Introduction pp. 17-8.

with its femaleness and pregnancy in the refugee camp. In both cases the body is, as per Foucault's definition, a 'political body' in the grips of relations of power,[465] and a battle ground. In the first case the battle is between the entourage's power and the protagonist, whose subjectivity does not always assist her entourage in its dominance of her body. In the second case the battle is between the power of biological laws governing pregnancy and the protagonist, whose subjectivity in vain resists those laws.

Between the two, the activist is the one who comes out of the battle defeated because she has lost all control on her body for the benefit of her foetus, while the first protagonist still keeps some control on her body. Ironically the activist is constructed throughout the story as a resisting subject: she obstinately resists the many attempts to guide her conduct, i.e. the power relations in which she is involved,[466] and the effects of pregnancy on her body; she considers her life an 'embodied revolution' against occupation, traditions and her own people. Nonetheless she is a subject physically subjected to her foetus' needs. This is also reflected in her subjection to a heterodiegetic narrator[467] who recounts her story instead of her, although allowing her to speak directly through reported speech.

Despite the 'private bodily resistance' the first protagonist is uncertain and irresolute in her stand, incapable to concretely resist her entourage's power,[468] clings to social archetypes for reassurance. She is a 'thinker, [who] merely sits back and monologizes'[469] about her experiences and discontent, who only at the very end expresses her need of achieving a distinguished, chosen subjectivity[470] and whose capacity to achieve it remains unproven.

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[465] See *Ibid.* p. 17.
[466] See *Ibid.* p. 18 for Foucault's definition of power relations.
[467] See Genette. *Op. cit.,* p. 252 for definition.
[468] The attempted suicide could be considered her only concrete gesture of resistance.
[469] O'Connor. *Op. cit.,* p. 25; [who] is my addition.
[470] This is the typical quest of short story's characters for Hafez; see above p. 58.

4) Nūrā Amīn

Nūrā Amīn was born in 1970 in Cairo, in whose university she achieved her university degree in French literature in 1992 and her master degree in comparative literature. She works in the Language and Translation Centre of the Academy of Arts, translates literary works from English and French, writes theatrical, cinematic and literary criticism for the newspaper *Al-Ahālī* and for the magazine *Al-Hilāl*, is a theatre, cinema and television actress, a dancer and a theatre and film director. Her literary production encompasses award-winning short stories and novels, plays, studies and screenplays,[471] but her short stories attract much less attention than the activities she organises with *La Musica*, the independent theatre group she founded in 2000.

Amīn's first three collections have several common features, such as the absence of dialogues and of all inessential elements. In fact characters have no names (only two stories in total have characters with proper names), there are no indications/descriptions of places, and events are reduced to a bare minimum. Most stories are chronicles of the thoughts, dreams, emotions and fantasies of the protagonists, who are chiefly women. From a narrative technique point of view it can be noticed that while heterodiegetic narrators prevail in the first collection, in the other two collections autodiegetic narrators[472] dominate stories that are mostly interior monologues of protagonists who in their imaginations silently address someone who is mostly absent. Like most of her contemporary female short story writers,[473] Amīn uses her texts to question prevailing values and moral norms. In *Jumal Iʿtirāḍiyyah* (Parenthetical Phrases) she deals with taboo subjects such as female and male homosexuality, sexual fulfilment, marital relations characterised by constriction, estrangement and frustration, physical violence towards women. The few male characters are fleeting, marginal, inoffensive.

In *Ṭuruqāt Muḥaddabah* (Convex Roads) Amīn explores how women who are not 'up to the norm' are punished and the intimacy and profundity of

[471] See bibliography for details.
[472] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, pp. 252-3 for definitions.
[473] See above pp. 76-86 for her Levantine context.

mother-child relations, which are set against intersexual non-maternal relations that are totally deprived of such features. Male characters, who are more numerous and important than in the first collection, play mainly negative roles as estranged fathers or husbands, condemnatory partners, violent fathers, coercive overseers. Murād Wahbah sees in Amīn's exploration and juxtaposition of these two kinds of relations a sort of call to revive matriarchy in a modern form.[474] In *Ḥālāt al-Taᶜāṭuf*[475] (Episodes of Sympathy) Amīn explores what happens after romantic relationships end and presents several non-normalised female characters: prostitutes, a divorced celibate mother, overtly sensual women, an alcoholic, women who have had several partners, a woman who finds herself in another woman's body. The few male characters are marginal fleeting partners or courting men.

From *Ṭuruqāt Muḥaddabah* I will examine "Imra'ah Muftaraḍah" (A Hypothetical Woman), which has been chosen because it presents the protagonist's experience of loss that jeopardises her sense of self, hence revealing what is the foundation of her subjectivity. The protagonist is 'a woman who has lost her – imposed – virginity on the conjugal bed. And lost also her husband and her marriage'[476] because he divorced her to marry another woman. This short story focuses on how the loss of her husband affects the subjectivity of the protagonist, who is convinced to have lost her femininity with the divorce:

كانت امرأة. وأصبحت مطلقة. [..]
كانت تعرف أنها لم تعد امرأة ولم تعد بنتاً ولا فتاة ، وهي بالقطع
ليست رجلاً ، إنما هي مطلقة .[..] تتجرع وحدها الخيبة ومرارة
الفشل في أن تكون امرأة ، ومرارة النجاح في أن تكون بلا جنس . [477]

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[474] Murād Wahbah. 'Al-Mar'ah ᶜĀm 1995', *Ibdāᶜ*, 1, (January 1996), p. 52. This article contains brief comments on several stories of the first two collections.
[475] I could trace only an article about this collection, which examines a story I did not consider: Samiyyah Ramaḍān. 'Rasā'il al-Jasad ᶜinda Nūrā Amīn wa ᶜAfāf al-Sayyid', *Ibdāᶜ*, 10-11, (October-November 1996), pp. 109-16.
[476] Nūrā Amīn. *Ṭuruqāt Muḥaddabah: Majmūᶜah Qiṣaṣiyyah*. (Al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Thaqāfah al-Jadīdah, 1995), p. 23.
[477] 'She was a woman. And became a divorcee. [..]
she knew that she was not a woman anymore, not a little girl anymore, nor a maiden, and she definitely was not a man, she was a divorcee. [..] lonely she swallows the disappointment and

In the protagonist's society an adult female to be considered a woman must be a wife, which is one of the many definitions of femininity customs and fashions have artificially determined as per de Beauvoir.[478] When she lost the wifehood her society equates with femininity 'she knew that she was not a woman anymore' because she has interiorised social norms to such an extent that they dominate her self-perception. It is not only society that labels her from the outside, it is her who knows that she is now a non-woman divorcee, as if divorce had transformed her subjectivity. Such interiorisation is visible also in her consideration of divorce as 'her failure to be a woman', despite having been repudiated for another wife, reflecting the social attitude of considering divorce exclusively women's fault. Considering divorce 'her failure to be a woman' also indicates that in her context her female body is less important than marriage among the elements that make her a woman.[479] Having lost marriage, and with it her social femininity, the protagonist strives to obliterate also her female body. She wraps her body in dark, long, loose clothes, bends her back to hide her breasts, lowers her voice as much as possible the few times she speaks, does not try to look pretty. She successfully repudiates her sex, hence mutilating her subjectivity and becoming an incomplete human being,[480] albeit with a bitterness that suggests that this mutilation is a forced 'choice' imposed by her social context.

الصفات الرصينة التي ينبغي على المرأة الرزينة أن تتحلى بها حتى لا
تفقد احترام المجتمع لها . [..]
أصبحت خطرا يهدد المجتمع بالمتعة الجسدية - المفترضة - التي عرفتها [481]

تخشى أن تمارس حياتها طبيعياً حتى لا يقول الناس عنها أنها غير
نادمة على طلاقها فتكون فاجرة ربما خانت زوجها [..]
كانت تخجل من موقعها - أو بالأحرى " لا موقعها "- في المجتمع [482]

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the bitterness of her failure to be a woman and the bitterness of her success in being sexless.' Amīn. *Op. cit.*, pp. 23-4.

[478] See Introduction pp. 50-1.

[479] This is an exasperation of de Beauvoir's idea that the body is only one of the elements that make a woman; see *Ibid.* p. 49.

[480] See *Ibid.* p. 48 for de Beauvoir's idea of femininity denial as mutilation.

[481] 'The calm features with which the poised woman must adorn herself so that she does not lose society's respect towards her.
[..] She became a danger that threatened society with the – supposed – bodily pleasure that she knew'. Amīn. *Op. cit.*, pp. 23.

The loss of social femininity and position caused by divorce has transformed her into a social danger that is constantly monitored, judged and suspected by the people surrounding her, even by her alleged friends. In such a situation the protagonist endeavours not to lose society's respect and her good reputation, hence she must lead a life that fully respects the rules predisposed for divorcees within her social group. She is expected to be calm, poised and contrite for the divorce, although she did not cause it, otherwise an extreme type of de Beauvoirian devaluation[483] will affect her: she will be labelled a libertine who betrayed her husband and ostracised, which is a form of Foucauldian individualisation.[484] Being already ashamed of her social non-position, she wants to avoid further individualisation, even if this means to sacrifice spontaneity and human contact in her lifestyle, strives to normalise herself to the 'rules for divorcees' and hence cooperates in maintaining her subordination, being more than a victim, as Bordo indicated.[485] She is such a keen accomplice that she even tries to subject her dreams to those rules, 'so that they could not spoil her imposed composure', but she cannot stop 'a terrible dream [that] often visited her unconscious'.[486]

يمارس معها الحب في تأن ورقة ، وبالطريقة التي تريدها تماما ، أو
بجميع الطرق التي تريدها تماما، تتعامل معه بتهم يعرف طريقه
للارتواء . حتى يشبعا وينتهي التلاهما الأول . [..]
هذه المرة ، يصحبهما الرجل فجأة إلي غرفة نوم بيتها القديم ،
يزيح " هي " القديمة المريضة من فوق الفراش كما لو أصبحت رداءً
فارغاً تعلوه رأس بيضاء باهتة لا تكاد تتنفس ." ينقبض قلبها
قليلاً ثم تتحرك كالحياة عندما تطير " هي " من النافذة إلي السماء. [487]

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[482] 'She fears to live her life naturally so that people cannot say about her that she does not regret her divorce and that she is a libertine that probably betrayed her husband [..]
She was ashamed of her position – or rather her "non-position" – in society'. *Ibid.* p. 24.
[483] See Introduction pp. 50-1.
[484] See *Ibid.* pp.15, 21.
[485] See *Ibid.* p. 39.
[486] Amīn. *Op. cit.,* pp. 25; [that] is my addition.
[487] 'He makes love with her softly and tenderly, exactly in the way she wants it, or exactly in all the ways she wants it, and she interacts with him with a thirst that knows how to be quenched. Until they are both satisfied and their first encounter ends. [..]
This time the man suddenly accompanies her to a bedroom in her old house, removes her old, sick "I" from the bed, as if it was an empty dress with a white, pale head attached on it that could barely breathe." Her heart is wrung a little, but then she moves like life when her "I" flies out of the window towards the sky.' *Ibid.* pp. 25-6.

This recurring dream reveals the dichotomy existing between her sexless, regimented public self[488] and a secret self that inhabits her dreams and longs for companionship and pleasure, which are denied to her public self because if actually pursued they would completely devalue the protagonist. The two selves are represented in the dream in the two "I": the public self is the "I" on the bed, old, sick and barely breathing because of the oppressive social control; the secret self is the protagonist of the dream who happily enjoys making love and strolling around with a male stranger. The protagonist of the dream is saddened by the poor state of her "I" on the bed, which recalls the bitterness the protagonist of the story feels for being a failed woman and a successful sexless being. Whether awake or sleeping the protagonist of the story is unsatisfied with her situation, which means that she has not completely interiorised the social rules that force her to live in that situation. The old and sick "I" flies out of the window when the man removes it, as if his human touch had broken the spell of isolation, control and disease (imposed by society), and revived its liveliness and good health. The joy of the protagonist of the dream at this sight indicates that the secret self longs to be rid of the same spell. This dream also reveals that, although she is convinced to have successfully become sexless, sexuality is still a component of her subjectivity. The protagonist's sex and sensuality are foregrounded throughout the erotic encounter, during which she reveals and appeases 'in all the ways she wants' desires that in real life are not socially admissible for a woman in her "non-position". When awake she can only repress, not obliterate, her sexuality, since she is a subject subdued to society by control[489] whose subjectivity, produced by power, assists power in its dominance of the body[490] and of the body's sexuality in particular. Nevertheless sleep neutralises these control mechanisms and nothing can prevent her secret self from expressing its sexuality and desires in dreams.

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[488] Murād Wahbah briefly refers to the protagonist's 'social I' that strives to obtain society's respect; see Wahbah. *Op. cit.,* p. 53.
[489] Here I am adapting one of Foucault's definitions of subject; see Introduction p. 12.
[490] For Foucauldian subjectivity as product and instrument of power see *Ibid.* pp.18-9.

From *Ḥālāt al-Taᶜāṭuf* I have chosen "Qāriᶜat al-Ṭarīq" (Road Surface) and "Ḥammālat Ṣadr Ukhrā" (Another Bra), because both their female protagonists, unlike the protagonist of the previous story, consciously foreground their sexuality in an unorthodox way, although with two different purposes and completely different outcomes.

"Qāriᶜat al-Ṭarīq" is a prostitute's monologue addressed to her clients, which starts and ends with the sentence 'I know my place well', which gives the story a circular structure. Although the protagonist accurately describes a physical place on the road surface close to the pavement's margin from which she is collected and to which she is returned, she seems to be metaphorically referring to her social status. She knows very well that, being a prostitute, she is condemned to live on the margins of her society and to be as little visible as possible, hence her request to her clients to return her to her place at dawn, so that she can disappear before full daylight. Her popularity does not induce her to think that she can escape her situation:

يتنالون نصيبهم. ثم يتفضلون بإيداعي في موضعي. فلا
تصيبني أية هواجس عن نهاية أخرى لرحلتي المتكررة. 491

لك أيضاً أن تطمئن تماماً لأنني لن أفشي أسرارك. ولن
ألومك مطلقاً لأنك تحرص على محو رائحتي من غرفتك.
ومن آثار عرقك أيها «الرجل الأوحد».. !. 492

The encounters with her clients always follow the same pattern. They pick her up from the street, they enjoy her services and then return her to her usual spot on the street, without her even imagining that those encounters could have a different ending, such as a loving client rescuing her from the streets. She is aware that, unlike other women, she does not conform to the idea of femininity her society has elaborated and is therefore sexually and socially so devalued[493] that in her clients' eyes she is not a woman like the

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[491] 'They take their part. Then they kindly put me in my place. It does not strike me the idea that this repetitive journey of mine could end up differently.' Nūrā Amīn. *Ḥālāt al-Taᶜāṭuf*. (Al-Qāhirah: al-Hay'ah al-ᶜĀmmah li-Quṣūr al-Thaqāfah, 1998), p. 47.

[492] 'Also be absolutely reassured, because I will not disclose your secrets. I will not blame you at all because you strive to cancel my smell from your room. And from the traces of your sweat oh «unique man»..!.' *Ibid.* p. 50.

[493] See Introduction pp. 50-1 for de Beauvoirian devaluation punishing transgressive women.

others. This implies that: she cannot aspire to what normalised women aspire to, in terms of treatment, respect, consideration, marriage, etc.; her clients are ashamed of her, a 'fallen' woman, and hence try to cancel every trace of her passage in their lives in order to keep their dealings with her as secret as possible and save their reputation. Nevertheless she is not offended. On the contrary she offers her cooperation to her client in order to keep secrecy, while she makes fun of him by addressing him as 'unique man', although both of them know that he is only one of many, which is one example of the verbal irony that permeates this short story. Secrecy benefits not only her clients but the protagonist herself, who is allowed to keep her familiar position on the road only if she 'disappear[s] with the daylight',[494] i.e. is invisible to the wider community, and remains within her dark corner. She is conscious of the fact that if she respects those conditions the liminality of her position exempts her and her clients from some common social and moral rules, hence giving them considerable freedom of action, of which she encourages her clients to take advantage:

سوف أزيح عنك تعقيدات الفحولة المنتظرة. ومعها الموسيقى الناعمة
والشموع الموقدة التي انصهرت جيداً من قبل. سوف أزيح
فراشك من وعود الحب. ومن طموحات الصغار. [..] إلهو بأعضائي
الآن كما يحلو لك. فجميع الألعاب التي تهواها مدرجة في دليل استخدامي.[495]

The protagonist gives her clients, apart from sexual satisfaction, an opportunity to leave aside the anxiety to prove their virility, which other women expect of them, and the thrill of transgressing for a little some norms and social conventions. They can dispense with the insincere romantic frills and love promises they use with other women, neglect procreation issues, free the sexual fantasies they must repress with other women, play any game they like without any moral restriction, because the protagonist is only a tool of pleasure for them, as the expression 'operator's manual' subtly hints at, not a respectable woman. With her the clients can lower their mask of social

[494] Amīn. *Ḥālāt al-Taᶜāṭuf*, p. 50.
[495] 'I will take away from you the complications of the expected virility. And with them the soft music and the lit candles that melted well before. I will free your bed from love promises. From the aspirations to the little ones.
[..] Now amuse yourself with my body parts as you like. All the games that you wish are included in my operator's manual.' *Ibid.* pp. 48-9.

respectability and uncover their worst while remaining unpunished and untarnished, albeit for her the situation is the opposite:

كإسم العذراء معشوقة صباك الذي تناديني به الآن،
فأصطنع حمرة الخجل. أو حرقة الرغبة. وأبث إليك في
حنكة شعور أنك «أول رجل». لأتركك تلقنني أسرار الصنعة.
أو أنك «آخر رجل» إذا كان هذا ما يثيرك. [496]

While these encounters are for the clients an opportunity to be genuine, for the protagonist they are a further farce in which she cynically utilises her experience in deciphering men's feelings to decide whether to act the role of the shy virgin who needs a man to teach her all sexual secrets or of the nymphomaniac who forgot how many lovers she had, in order to suit her clients' desires, which nevertheless she ironises. She easily manages to be any subject her clients want her to be; the subject being not a substance but a form for Foucault,[497] she can effortlessly slip in and out of these forms as required by her clients, manipulating them like toys, who however are ultimately free to do whatever they want *with* and *of* her. Despite her cynicism and irony, the protagonist must do what men dictate to her because she is trapped in a situation that makes her dependent on them to earn her living. When the encounters end she is returned to her marginal position on the road, to which she is permanently chained because sexual and social norms exclude her from any other opportunity available within wider society. Clients instead can exit that marginality and re-enter wider society without losing their respectability and social place, because moral and social double standards allow them to do it. The protagonist is simultaneously an individualised outcast in the wider society, and hence free from some social norms, and a subject completely subdued to her clients by dependence in Foucauldian terms[498] within her marginal world.

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[496] 'Like the name of your childhood's virgin sweetheart, by which you call me now, and I feign blushing shyness. Or ardent desire. I disclose to you, with my experience of feelings, that you are «the first man» in order to let you teach me the secrets of the trade. Or that you are «the last man» if this is what turns you on.' *Ibid.* pp. 49-50.
[497] See Introduction p. 33.
[498] See *Ibid.* p. 12.

"Ḥammālat Ṣadr Ukhrā" is also a monologue the protagonist mentally addresses to the men who stare at her while she walks towards a lingerie shop where she wants to buy a bra and it is wrapped in an atmosphere of eroticism that the protagonist intentionally creates:

نعم. أنا المرأة الفتاكة التي ساقها إليكم قدركم
التعس، حتى تقض مضاجعكم.
في شارع واسع كهذا، لا يهمني أن ينحسر القميص
على صدري فيشيخ بتوقعاتكم . أو يتطاير شعري
الغجري فيطلق خيالاتكم. أنا أخطو ضد اتجاه الريح
وأستمتع بعنفوانه وهو يقتحمني. يتلذذ هو أيضاً باندفاع
فخذَي القويتين نحوه فيثار أكثر ويأخذني في حركة
دوامية.[..] تطرق نساؤكم قليلاً نحو الأرض [..]
أطوي الأكمام
إلى أعلى، وأكشف عن شعيراتي المفضلة. وبعضاً آخر
من وقاحتي. أشجعكم لخوض أبعد في الخيال. 499

The protagonist immediately and proudly declares her unconformity to her addressees. She is a femme fatale, not one of their women, a woman of whom society disapproves because she defies social norms governing women's behaviours by putting in evidence her body, by letting her hair fly around, a woman who perturbs 'good family men'. She is aware that her foregrounded sensuality attracts all male gazes along the street and she enjoys provoking men's fantasies and her 'encounter' with the wind, whose sensual description alludes to her own sexual fantasies that she is not ashamed to admit to herself. In front of the protagonist, whose clothes adhere to her body because of the wind's action, other women bow their heads, as if overwhelmed by her sensuality, and grab their men by the hand to divert their attention from her.

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499 'Yes. I am the femme fatale that your unhappy destiny has sent you so that she can make you lose your sleep.
In a wide road like this it does not concern me that my blouse opens up on my chest and diverts your expectations. Or that that my gipsy hair fly around and free your fantasies. I walk against the wind's direction, I enjoy its vigour while it penetrates me. It also savours my strong thighs pushing against it, it gets more excited and it takes me with a continuous movement.[..] Your women bow their heads a little [..] I roll up my sleeves, revealing my favourite little hairs. And another part of my impudence. I encourage you to plunge deeper into imagination.' Amīn. *Ḥālāt al-Ta^{c}āṭuf*, p. 63.

The other women's attitude encourages the protagonist to foreground her sexed body even further by rolling up her sleeves with deliberate impudence and defiance, whose resonance is amplified by its juxtaposition with other women's modesty and compliance. Such sensuality, impudence and defiance though do not seem to discredit her in the eyes of the good men dragged by the hand; instead they follow her to the lingerie shop pretending to be customers in order to have more time to observe her. The part of the story taking place in the shop shows a dichotomy between the protagonist's actions and fantasies. The external actions she performs are only to request a bra from the shop owner, pay for it and leave. In her imagination though she wants to run a competition among the male shoppers to see who can determine the size of her new bra, with which she is ironically pointing out that she is well aware of how the good family men are feasting their eyes on her breasts.

She also wishes to show her thighs to prove that she has a body like Demi Moore's and also to benefit the male shoppers surrounding her, whose sexual fantasies and lives could be boosted by such sight, without them having to wait until the summer to stare at tourist's bare legs, an ironic hint at the sexual repression and frustration in which they live. Nevertheless she does not accomplish any of her fantasies, because she knows that such behaviour is incompatible with the idea of femininity elaborated by the social context in which she is singularly situated, and that if she crosses the boundary between licit and illicit she will lose her social value and attract contempt rather than admiration. Despite her defiance, she is still a subject conditioned by social customs concerning femininity, as de Beauvoir theorised,[500] who coexists with a resisting subject who enjoys titillating men and fantasising and who however can only express herself in the realm of imagination. The femme fatale hence experiences a dichotomy between a regimented public self and a secret self that inhabits her imagination, where she can transgress all the rules she likes and encourages the men watching her to do the same:

[500] See Introduction pp. 50-1.

أتشبث بهذه القطعة السوداء الجميلة، لأنها سوف تلم
داخلها الثديين المشققين من نظراتكم، أو لنقل لأن تباين
لونها مع أبيضي سوف يعطي تأثيراً جذاباً لأعينكم التي
تصوبونها نحو مفاتني فأحرص أن أكون جديرة بها [501]

Those men are devouring her breasts with their eyes so much that they have 'chapped' them, but this does not irritate her; on the contrary she encourages men's attention. She has chosen a black bra, a colour that is commonly associated with provocative lingerie, and holds it in her hands, so that the men can fantasise about how it will look on her white breasts and stare at them even more. She does not seem to pursue such intent for pure vanity, but rather because she enjoys the role of 'inspiring muse' of those men's sexual fantasies and tries to boost this transgressive imagination, creating a sort of untold complicity with the men, a common ground in which both parties' imaginations can run wild and take pleasure without exposing themselves to public blame.

To conclude the three protagonists of these stories belong to O'Connor's 'submerged population groups'[502] because they are not 'up to the norm' of their societies. The features that distinguish them from others are accentuated in order to categorise and isolate them from others in a Foucauldian individualisation[503] that is perpetrated by all society in the first and second story and by women only in the third. The nuances of their differences from the norm are classified, so that when the difference from the norm is the greatest (the second story) the exclusion of individualisation is total and when the difference is the mildest (the third story) the exclusion is partial. The degree of individualisation of the characters influences what they express in terms of need or obligation of distinction from the community.[504] It is the community that marks out the divorcee and the prostitute, who are respectively severely and

[501] 'I cling to this nice black piece, because it will gather inside it the breasts chapped by your gazes, or, let us say, because the contrast of its colour against my whiteness will produce a magnetic effect for the eyes that you point at my charms, which I take great care in deserving' Amīn. *Ḥālāt al-Taʿāṭuf*, p. 66.
[502] O'Connor. *Op. cit.*, p. 6.
[503] See Introduction pp. 15, 21 for more details.
[504] See p. 57 above for more details.

completely individualised and do not express any deliberate intention to be distinguished. The femme fatale instead, who is the less individualised of the three, wishes to be distinguished from other women and deliberately foregrounds what makes her special, which then induces women to exclude her.

The attitude of the three protagonists towards individualisation is different: the divorcee silently undergoes it, defined a divorcee by the narrator; the prostitute is conscious of her outcast status and indirectly acknowledges it repeating twice 'I know my place well',[505] although she never defines herself prostitute; by defining herself femme fatale, the third protagonist instead subverts the individualising potential of this label, re-appropriates it and uses it ironically to describe her non-normalised status, of which she is somewhat proud. Individualisation is also a useful narrative strategy for the author that uses the 'abnormal' differences to create characters that represent generic female human types rather than individuals: the divorcee, the prostitute, the femme fatale.

These three short stories also articulate the protagonists' experiences of subjective fragmentation,[506] which is caused by marginality, as Harper has indicated but not explained.[507] I think that this can be explained if the formation of subjectivity is supposed to happen through intersubjective reciprocal relationships among equals as de Beauvoir theorised or through the care of the self as social practice as Foucault theorised.[508] Such activities are made impossible by marginality, which is exclusion from society, rather than integration, and implies inferiority, rather than equality. All three protagonists are marginalised and treated as inferiors to different extents, hence unable to establish within their communities the intersubjective reciprocal equal relationships they need in order to develop their subjectivities. This results in the divorcee and the femme fatale being split between their regimented public

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[505] See p. 153 above.
[506] Which is a typical feature of the short story for Hafez; see pp. 57 above.
[507] Phillip Brian Harper. *Framing the Margins: the Social Logic of Postmodern Culture.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 27-9.
[508] See Introduction p. 52.

subjectivities and their secret subjectivities and the prostitute being fragmented into all the subjects her clients want her to be.

Their subject positions are also different. The divorcee is a subject completely subdued to the other, which is society, by a control in which she unconsciously cooperates. The prostitute is not subdued to wider society's control because she lives outside it, while in her liminal world she is consciously subdued to clients by an inescapable economic dependence.[509] The third protagonist instead is a subject consciously subjected to social customs concerning femininity,[510] who resists some of them overtly by adopting the identity of femme fatale not as a universal ethical norm, but rather as a game that encourages her interactions with men surrounding her, which is a useful function Foucault attributed to identity.[511] These subject positions are strengthened in the attribution of the narrator role within the récit. The heterodiegetic narrator of the first story deprives the most subdued of the three subjects of the ownership of the narrative, while in the other two stories the protagonists/autodiegetic narrators[512] have the privilege of narrating their own stories without any interference.

[509] I am adapting one of Foucault's definitions of subject; see *Ibid.* p. 12.
[510] I am adapting de Beauvoir's definitions of female subject; see *Ibid.* pp. 50-1.
[511] See *Ibid.* p. 14.
[512] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, p. 252-3 for definitions.

CHAPTER THREE

TRAPPED FEMALE SUBJECTS IN IRAQ AND THE GULF

This third chapter will follow the same pattern of chapter two and will be divided into three sections, corresponding to the three writers and countries representing the area: Iraqi Daisy al-Amīr, Saudi Badriyyah al-Bishr and Emirati Salmā Maṭar Sayf.

1) Daisy al-Amīr

Daisy al-Amīr was born in 1935 in Alexandria[513] in a Lebanese-Iraqi family that moved back to Iraq soon after her birth. In Baghdad she obtained her university degree in Arabic language and literature and then studied sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts; she later obtained a diploma in English from Cambridge University. After several years of teaching in Iraq, in the 1960's she moved to Beirut, where she worked in the Iraqi Embassy first and in the Iraqi Cultural Centre later. In 1985 she returned to Iraq for a brief period, followed by a sojourn in the US and then settled in Beirut again. She has published seven short story collections.[514]

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[513] Four sources indicate Alexandria as her birthplace: al-Fayṣal. *Op. cit.,* p. 42; ᶜĀshūr, Ghazūl, Rashīd [et al.] (eds.). *Op. cit.,* vol. 3, p.107; Donohue and Tramontini (eds.). *Op. cit.,* vol.1, p. 108; ᶜĪsā Futūḥ (17/06/2006): "Daisy al-Amīr Sayyidat al-Qiṣṣah al-Mahmūsah". WWW document, URL: http://www.awu-dam.org/esbou1000/1011/isb1011-013.htm, retrieved on 23/10/2007. One source indicates Basra (Meisami and Starkey (eds.). *Op. cit.,* vol. 1, p. 87), another one Baghdad (Zaydān. *Op. cit.,* p. 102).

[514] See bibliography for details.

Al-Aᶜrajī considers typical features of al-Amīr's art her simple style and language, the common events around which her stories are centred, the predominance of self-reflection to the expenses of the outside, which is only an unimportant decorative background.[515] In stories that delve into the interiority of the mainly female and lonely protagonists the prevalence of heterodiegetic *récits* is a tool to avoid slipping into sentimentalism and emotiveness. Several of those protagonists in *Al-Balad al-Baᶜīd alladhī Tuḥibbu*[516] (The Far Country that She Loves) are students who, despite their loneliness, are living the enthusiasm of the first romantic approaches, but such enthusiasm in the following collections is replaced by despondency. In *Thumma Taᶜūdu al-Mawjah* (Then the Wave Returns) the sadness of the modern working women protagonists of the stories[517] is due to a social context that forces them to restrain their ambitions, and seems unaffected by the wealth the bourgeois protagonists enjoy. From this collection onwards bourgeois characters prevail in al-Amīr's stories,[518] an element that marks her out from the majority of Iraqi writers, who people their short stories with proletarians, and in particular from her female contemporaries, who employed a wide array of characters.[519]

Notwithstanding the title, *Al-Bayt al-ᶜArabī al-Saᶜīd*[520] (The Happy Arab House) is a 'house that does not make its inhabitants happy'.[521] Misery is caused either by loneliness, for the unattached protagonists living alone, or by

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[515] Al-Aᶜrajī. *Op. cit.,* p.77.

[516] This collection has received much critical attention: Bāsim ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd Ḥumūdī. 'Al-Balad al-Baᶜīd alladhī Tuḥibbu', *Al-Adāb*, 13:4, (April 1965), p. 61 contains brief analyses of short stories that I have not selected; ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Sulaymān al-Darbandī. *Dirāsāt ᶜan al-Mar'ah al-ᶜIrāqiyyah al-Muᶜāṣirah*, vol. 2. (Baghdād: Dār al-Baṣrī, 1970), p. 289 only mentions the collection title; Farrāj. *Op. cit.,* pp. 121-30 contains analyses of short stories I have not selected, remarks about al-Amīr's female characters in general and comparisons with other women author's female characters; Maḥmūd Fawzī. *Adab al-Aẓāfir al-Ṭawīlah*. (Al-Qāhirah: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr li-l-Ṭabᶜ wa al-Nashr, 1987), pp. 187-93 comments on the general atmospheres of the first five collections of al-Amīr (excluding the second) and analyses short stories I have not selected.

[517] As indicated in Mawfiq Hāshim al-Shadīdī. 'Al-Baḥt ᶜan Ṣūrah Jadīdah li-l-Mar'ah', *Al-Ādāb*, 17:12, (December 1969), pp. 29-31.

[518] As indicated in ᶜAlī al-Qāsimī. 'Thumma Taᶜūdu al-Mawjah Majmūᶜah Qiṣaṣ bi-Qalam Daisy al-Amīr', *Al-Ādāb*, 18:4, (April 1970), pp. 69-70.

[519] See above pp. 86-9 for the Iraqi literary context.

[520] This collection has received much less attention that the previous one: Accad and Ghurayyib. *Op. cit.,* pp. 64-6 comments on a short story I have not selected

[521] Ḥasab Allah Yaḥyā. 'Mashākil al-Mar'ah fī Arbaᶜ Majmūᶜāt Qiṣaṣiyyah', *Al-Aqlām*, 11, (August 1975), p. 97.

frustration of aspirations, marital incompatibility or betrayal for the protagonists involved in romantic relationships or living with their birth family. In *Fī Dawwāmat al-Ḥubb wa al-Karāhiyah* (In the Whirlwind of Love and Hate) it is the Lebanese civil war's harshness and inhumanity that sadden the lives of the lonely female protagonists,[522] while in *Wuᶜūd li-l-Bayᶜ* [523] (Promises for Sale) wretchedness is due to unhappy romantic relationships criticised or ended by the protagonists.

The first short story under analysis is "Al-Sajjādah al-Ṣaghīrah"[524] (The Little Rug) from al-Amīr's first collection, which I have chosen because it explores the link between marginality and the protagonist's subjectivity, a young woman who has lost both parents and now lives in her paternal uncle's house. In a Chekhovian fashion the author conveys the protagonist's inner reality by recounting the apparently trivial episode of the little rug with carefully selected concrete details that effectively suggest the torments the girl withstands in that household. When the girl returns to the sitting room her mother's rug, which her uncles' wife insists on using as a door mat, her aunt '[throws] it once again on the threshold' saying:

«لمَ لا تهتمين بشؤونك الخاصة بدل التدخل فيما لا يعنيك» ؟
لا يعنيني !! الا يعنيني ان اعتني بفرشنا وارتبه كما كان
في منزلنا ؟.. منزلنا ..؟ .. منزلنا !!.. لقد مرت فترة
طويلة جداً منذ ان استعملت ضمير المتكلم : منزلي ومنزلنا !
اصبحت تقول : بيتكم وفرشكم [..] اذ
لم تعد تحس يوماً واحداً بعد انتقالها الى السكنى في بيت
عمها ان هناك شيئاً في الدنيا يخصها هي او ان لها الحق في
ان تنسبه الى نفسها . [..] أليس لها هي الحق في ان
تنسب الى نفسها شيئاً ؟ اي شيء ؟ اي شيء ..؟ [525]

[522] On this collection see Ḥaydar, Randah. 'Ṣawtāni Niswiyyāni.. ᶜan al-Ḥarb al-Lubnāniyyah', *Al-Ādāb*, 27:11, (November 1979), p. 74.
[523] ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Majīd al-Rubayᶜī. *Aṣwāt wa-Khuṭuwāt: Maqālāt fī al-Qiṣṣah al-ᶜArabiyyah.* (Tūnus: Dar al-Maᶜārif, 1994), pp. 63-73 gives the plots of this collection's stories.
[524] This story is quoted in Riyāḍ Najīb al-Rayyis. 'Sijill al-Qiṣṣah al-Qaṣīrah', *Ḥiwār*, 3:6, (September-October 1965), p. 136 and in Riyāḍ Najīb al-Rayyis. *Al-Fatrah al-Ḥarijah 1960-1965: Dirāsāt Naqdiyyah.* (Bayrūt: al-Mu'assasah al-Waṭaniyyah li-l-Ṭibāᶜah wa al-Nashr, 1965), p. 48 as an example of the ordinary style and events typical of al-Amīr.
[525] '«Why do you not mind your own business rather than interfering in what does not concern you»? Does not concern me!! Does it not concern me to look after our furnishings and put them in order as they were in our home?.. Our home..? Our home!!.. A very long time had

With her first sentence the aunt simultaneously deprives her niece of material possessions and of a family: she denies the girl the property of her mother's rug by including it in 'what does not concern you', and wilfully excludes her from the family by defining house affairs 'not her business'. The exclamatory 'does not concern me!!' conveys the girl's surprise at her aunt's words that exclude her from the possession of furnishings and a home she calls 'our' because she is under the illusion that she shares them with her uncle's family as a family member. The interrogative expression 'our home..?' reveals though that she is recovering from her illusion and now doubting that the house in which she lives is really her home, while the exclamatory repetition of the same expression expresses her surprise at her own audacity. She has dared to think that that house belongs also to her, something she has not done since she moved into her uncle's house, aware that her actual dwelling is not her house. Nevertheless the girl's need for a sense of belonging has induced her to dream for a moment of belonging to her uncle's family. Her aunt's reminder that she is an outsider frustrates her need, frustration that is conveyed by the repetition of 'the right to call hers' and 'anything?' that the heterodiegetic narrator, not the protagonist, performs.

Despite the personal reflections it contains, the above quote is dominated by a heterodiegetic narrator, except the second and third lines, in what I consider a deliberate narrative technique. The protagonist 'owns' the narrative as autodiegetic[526] narrator when she is under the illusion of belonging to her uncle's family, i.e. of 'owning' a family. As soon as the girl's illusion vanishes and her marginality in the family is revealed, she is deprived of the narrative's 'ownership' in favour of a heterodiegetic narrator, creating a parallel between her marginalisation in the uncle's family and her marginalisation in the narrative process. This same narrative technique is repeated throughout the story, which is mostly 'owned' and narrated by a heterodiegetic narrator that

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passed since she used the first person pronoun: my house and our house! She had started to say: your house, your furnishings [..] because after she moved into her uncle's house she did not feel anymore not even for one day that in the world there is something that belongs to her or that she has the right to call hers. [..] has she not the right to call hers something? Anything? Anything..?' Daisy al-Amīr. *Al-Balad al-Baʿīd alladhī Tuḥibbu*. (Bayrūt: Dār al-ʿAwdah, 1969), p. 26. In previous quote [throws] replaces 'threw'.

[526] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, pp. 252-3 for definitions of heterodiegetic and autodiegetic.

narratively ostracises a protagonist that is marginalised by everybody in the story, as we will see. In fact, apart from the two lines quoted above, the protagonist is the autodiegetic narrator only of the first lines of the story, in which she is the centre rather than the margin because she monologises:

لا لن اعود الى البيت .. لن أعود، وليقل الناس عني ما يريدون .. لن اهتم هذه المرة بأقوالهم .. سأحقق ما في نفسي ، سأكونها ، ولطالما تمنيت ان اكون نفسي كما اريدها ان تكون لا كما يريدها لي الآخرون .. ثم انتبهت الى انها تقول هذه الكلمات بصوت يُسمع ، حتى ان بعض المارة استوقفتهم غرابة تصرفها فسكتت واستمرّت تحدث نفسها صامتة ... « سأقول لعمي انه اسوأ عم في الدنيا ، وان زوجته شر ما خلق الله .. لقد سكتُّ فترة طويلة رأيت فيها أثاث بيتنا وحوائجنا وحوائج امّي تسيء استعمالها ايد غريبة ، ولكني اليوم لم اعد اتحمّل السكوت، لا . استطيع ، لا استطيع » .[527]

These reflections follow the episode of the rug in the *histoire*;[528] nevertheless they are posited at the beginning of the short story, as if they were a 'declaration of intents' whose application and final disavowal the story illustrates.[529] The girl does not intend to return home after the argument with her aunt, regardless of the public disapproval this behaviour will attract, which she has decided to ignore. Nevertheless as soon as she realises that by thinking aloud she is drawing the attention of passers-by she shuts up, despite her refusal to tolerate silence anymore, because she is unable to resist those examining gazes.[530] The protagonist intends also to create her self as she wants it to be and to ignore the self others try to imposed on her, which

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[527] 'No, I will not return home.. I will not return, let people say what they want about me.. This time I will not care about what they say.. I will accomplish what is in my self, I will create it, how often I have wished to create my self as I want it to be and not as others want it for me... She then realised that she was saying those words with an audible voice, so that her strange behaviour drew the attention of some passers-by, hence she shut up and continued to talk to herself in silence... «I will tell my uncle that he is the worst uncle in the world and that his wife is the evilest of God's creatures.. I have shut up for a long time, during which I saw our house fittings, our possessions and my mother's possessions misused by alien hands, but today I cannot stand silence anymore, I cannot, I cannot».' Al-Amīr. *Op. cit.*,p. 25.

[528] See Genette. *Op. cit.,* p.72 for definition.

[529] The story ends with the protagonist's words 'Yes, I just returned'. Al-Amīr. *Op. cit.,* p. 31.

[530] By examining gaze I mean a gaze that executes Foucauldian examination, i.e. classifies her as different from the norm, normalises and punishes her. See Introduction p. 21.

reflects Foucault's encouragement to reject prescriptive subjectivities imposed by institutions in order for each individual to create her new coherent subjectivity 'like a work of art' without precluding any possibility.[531] She sounds assertive when she plans to reproach her uncle and aunt, whom she defines 'alien hands', for mistreating her and misusing her property and when she intends to visit her cousin to avow her torments. Once at her cousin's house though her cousin's female guests with their gossips about an absent unhappy friend trigger her bitter reflections and a change of plans:

لقد استطاعت بمظهرها الهادىء وكبريائها ان توهم الناس
انها سعيدة ، فلو خلعت هذا القناع وتنازلت عن كبريائها
فماذا سيكون ؟ [..] لو زاد شيء لكان فقدان احترام
الآخرين وزوال اعجابهم ، والناس لا يحبون ولا يحترمون
غير السعداء .. الناس لا يحترمون غير السعداء ..!. [..]
ومن غير ان تدري كيف ، بدأت تتحدث عن زوجة عمها
وحبها لها واهتمام عمها بأمرها ... تأملت عيون السامعات
وكلها اصغاء واعجاب واحترام [..]
حسبتها الحاضرات تلك المدللة المحبوبة السعيدة حقاً ،
احتقرت غباوتهن ونظرت في عيني ابنة عمتها ، فرأت
نظرات الاعجاب والاحترام نفسها ! ولوهلة قصيرة خيل
لها ان ما قالته صحيح ولكن سرعان ما استيقظت من هذه
النشوة ، فقامت مسرعة تترك بيت ابنة عمتها [532]

She realises that she has nothing to gain from taking off her mask of happy subject and revealing how despondent she is. Like the absent, harshly criticised friend she will lose those women's (and society's) respect and fondness, because she is conscious, as the repeated exclamatory 'people respect only the happy ones..!' highlights, that the only subject that attracts respect and admiration in her social context is the prescriptive happy one.

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[531] See *Ibid.* p. 15 for details.

[532] 'With her calm appearance and her pride she could make people believe that she was happy; if she took off this mask and gave up her pride what would happen? [..] if something happened it would be the loss of others' respect and the end of their liking, since people love and respect only the happy ones.. People respect only the happy ones..!. [..] Without knowing how, she started talking about her uncle's wife, her love for her and her uncle's interest in her... She contemplated her listeners' eyes, which were all attention, liking and respect [..] the present ladies really considered her spoiled, loved and happy; she despised their stupidity, looked in her cousin's eyes and saw the same looks of liking and respect! For a brief moment it seemed to her that what she said was true, but in a flash she woke up from this frenzy, quickly stood up and left her cousin's house'. Al-Amīr. *Op. cit.,* p. 29.

Hence exposing her misery will worsen her quality of life, since she will have to bear the individualisation that will derive from not being up to the 'happiness norm'.[533] After having analysed so rationally all those aspects, 'without knowing how', which suggests an unconscious rather than conscious act, she starts praising her uncle and his wife. For fear of individualisation she unconsciously conforms to the 'happiness norm' and lets the prescriptive happy self talk, hiding her tormented self. The two selves are in deep contradiction, perform different actions,[534] revealing the subjective fragmentation of the protagonist: the prescribed one keeps talking and lying and the miserable one observes the listeners and analyses their behaviour, noticing attention, approval and respect in the women's eyes. This confirms that her prescribed self and the happy story, despite being just a mask, are what her listeners want and accept, as she had expected. Her tormented self despises their stupidity for believing her inflated stories, although these women do not know her or her uncle and aunt, hence they justifiably believe her. The same cannot be said for her cousin though, who knows her and dislikes the aunt.[535] However her eyes are filled with the same approval and respect of the other women, which means that she too believes and likes her happy story, to the protagonist's surprise, expressed in the exclamatory 'saw the same looks of liking and respect!'.

Mirroring her cousin's belief, the protagonist too for an irrational moment (hence the word frenzy) believes that the story she is recounting is true and that she really is a happy subject. This rapid 'subject swapping' recalls the Foucauldian idea that the subject 'is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not above all and always identical to itself'.[536] Now that she is engaged in this social relationship she takes a form and establishes a relation to herself that aim mainly at pleasing her interlocutors and are different from the form she takes and the relation she establishes when she is alone. It is a very short-lived moment though. Recovered from her irrational spree, she now

[533] Foucault indicates that individualisation is discipline's way to punish 'all that is inadequate to the rule'; see Introduction p. 21.
[534] Before she arrives at her cousin's, the sentence 'she felt her hand knocking on a door' (see al-Amīr. *Op. cit.*, p. 28) suggests the protagonist's dissociation from her hand.
[535] Her cousin 'was not at all a friend of her uncle's wife'; see *Ibid.* p. 27.
[536] See Introduction p. 33.

knows that also her cousin wants her to be a subject she is not; thus she quickly leaves her cousin's house, hoping to find acceptance of her miserable self in her maternal aunt, to whom she is bonded by reciprocal affection. The aunt though is busy with the preparation of a banquet, for which she asks the protagonist's help:

انها متعبة مرهقة ولكن .. انها مدينة لخالتها بأشياء
كثيرة ، [..] وقد حان اليوم وقت ترد
فيه لخالتها بعض افضالها ، فكيف تعتذر عن المساعدة ؟
انها أسيرة الفضل [..] ستشارك في الاعداد
لهذه الوليمة .. انها ليست انساناً يحق له كالآخرين ان يظهر
شعوره ، عليها ان تكظم آلامها الى فترة ما بعد وليمة خالتها .
[..] عليها ان تتألم ان تألم الآخرون وان تفرح
اذا فرحوا وتضحك معهم وهي تكاد أن تتمزق ، لان
لهؤلاء الآخرين فضلاً عليها ولا فضل لها على الناس حتى
يحق لها ان تطلب منهم مشاركتها وجدانياً .
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The distressed protagonist would like to avoid participating in the banquet, nonetheless she cannot refuse her aunt help, because she has a debt of gratitude that puts her in a subordinate position in respect of her aunt who, despite her affection, gives for granted that her niece will help her. There is an unequal relationship between the two women and the aunt is using the power her superior position gives her to determine her niece's conduct.[538] The protagonist is in the same position also in front of others in general. She must mimic the feelings of those around her regardless of her true emotional state, which must not be verbalised, because she is in a subordinate and marginal position that deprives her of any right, even of sympathy, while others can claim rights over her. The protagonist's marginalisation is multifaceted and due to several causes. Deprived of her father, she is subordinated among her

[537] 'She is tired and exhausted but.. she owes her aunt many things, [..] and today the time has come to return to her aunt some of her favours, how can she find an excuse not to help? She is prisoner of favours [..] She will share in the preparation of this banquet.. She is not a human being that has the right to show her feelings like others, she must repress her pains until after her aunt's banquet. [..] She must suffer if others suffer, rejoice if they rejoice, laugh with them while she is on the verge of bursting, because she is indebted to those others, while people are not indebted to her, so she is not entitled to ask them to sympathise with her.' Al-Amīr. *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

[538] I am paraphrasing Foucault's definition of power relations; see Introduction pp. 17-8.

relatives because she depends on them for guardianship (familial marginality). The heterodiegetic narrator also introduces other causes:

لو كانت تستطيع ان تعمل وتكسب دراهم اذن لأغنتها الدراهم عن كثير من المشاكل التي تلاقيها ، ولكن .ما ذنبها ، اذا كان عمها قد اوقفها عن الدراسة حين توفي والدها ؟ وهي لا تستطيع ان تعمل بائعة في محل او ما شاكل هذه الاعمال ، ومحيطها المتحجب لا يسمح بفكرة القيام بعمل يتنافى مع المحافظة كما يعلو لعمها ان يسمي الرجعية وضيق العقل ...[539]

The protagonist's lack of economic independence causes subordination to her keeper (economic marginality). Although paid employment could be the solution to many of her problems, it has been ruled out by her uncle, who has interrupted her education when he became her legal guardian at her father's death and has prevented her from gaining qualifications and good professional prospects. She cannot work in a shop or in another similar unskilled position, because the secluded environment in which she lives does not accept a job that it considers incompatible with what the uncle defines 'conservatism', a word that conveys his agreement with the environment's principles, and the heterodiegetic narrator calls 'backwardness and narrow-mindedness', words that express the narrator's (and implicitly the protagonist's)[540] negative vision of those values. Another cause of her marginality hidden between those lines is her sex. She has been taken out of school and cannot work in a shop because she is a woman and as such her conservative patriarchal environment discriminates against her (social marginality).

The uncle and his wife are cunningly using the girl's economic dependence to make the girl feel a burden and marginal, but the uncle is the one who is forcing her into economic dependence by forbidding her to work in order to keep her under control and subjected. The girl is aware that she

[539] 'If she could work and earn money then money would free her from many of the problems she encounters; but is it her fault if her uncle prevented her from studying when her father died? She cannot work as a shop assistant or in a similar job since her secluded environment does not allow the idea of performing a job that contrasts with conservatism, as it pleases her uncle to call backwardness and narrow-mindedness...' Al-Amīr. *Op. cit.*, pp. 27-8.

[540] This is an example of a third person narration that hides a first person narration, which Barthes defines 'système personnel du récit'; see Roland Barthes. 'Introduction à l'Analyse Structurale des Récits', *Communication,* 8, (1966), p. 20.

cannot overcome her economic dependence without help, thus she seeks help and consolation from her cousin, her maternal aunt and a friend. She soon realises two things: her needs are marginal, even for people who are kind to her, because she is always in the inferior position in relationships that are unequal, although benign; her cousin, her aunt and her friend are so entangled in their activities that seem disjointed from her, unable to perceive her suffering, estranged from her when she needs them most and this induces in her a sense of alienation and defeat.

She returns home without conscious effort. She was walking in the streets, among people 'she saw [..] and she did not see',[541] when she heard the voice of her uncle's wife asking if it was her and she replied from her room that she had just returned. She had already entered the house and her room without realising it, as if her self had dissociated from her body.

The image resulting from this short story is that of a subject that aspires to her own personally constructed subjectivity, but who soon finds herself caught in a familial and socio-economic marginality that not only impedes her ambition but also, as Harper maintains, fragments her subjectivity[542] into splinters flying towards opposite directions: the self that wants to belong to her uncle's family, the self that recognises them as alien, the self that wants to believe to be happy, the self that wants to shout its unhappiness.

The second short story under scrutiny is "ᶜAmmat Rafīq"[543] (Rafīq's Paternal Aunt) from the third collection, which I have selected because it shows how the protagonist's political participation, despite its appearances of enlightening experience, negatively affects the protagonist's subjectivity.

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[541] Al-Amīr. *Op. cit.,* p. 31.
[542] Harper. *Op. cit.,* pp. 27-9.
[543] Yaḥyā comments about the protagonist lacking time for herself in Yaḥyā. *Op. cit.* Farrāj writes about the protagonist's political engagement as a method to sublimate her suffocated energy, to forget her inability to accomplish her personal life in a coercive and harshly serious political world. Farrāj underlines that repression operates outside and inside: the traditional social disapproval of pleasure and recreation reaches the protagonist's interiority and acts as an inhibitory factor that accompanies her wherever she goes; see Farrāj. *Op. cit.,* pp. 124-6. Munīr ᶜAtībah comments on society demanding the protagonist to have her own personality only for the political fight's sake while considering her only her male comrades' appendix; see Munīr ᶜAtībah (11/05/2005): "Ḥiṣād al-Ramād: Qirā'ah Adabiyyah fī Aᶜmāl Nisā'iyyah". WWW document, URL: http://www.syrianstory.com/comment13-1.htm, retrieved on 10/03/2008.

It was her brother who introduced her to the political world and its ideals when he 'made her the confidante of all his secrets', 'found in her the fight companion', 'consulted her about [..] his plans'.[544] The verbal forms and personal pronouns underline that: the brother is always the subject of the verbs, of which the sister is always the direct or indirect object, which indicates that between the two there is a power relation in which the brother is always the subjecting superior and the sister is the unaware subjected inferior; the secrets, the fight, the plans are not hers nor theirs, but his, well conveying the idea that the protagonist is working for principles she has not created or contributed to, that she just accepts because they have been announced by her brother, the young patriarch who knows best.

فتأثرت بأقواله وآمنت بأعماله وتحمست لقوة شخصيته
فصارت تدعو لآرائه وتكرر أقواله [545]

Her political engagement is an aspect of her total subjection to her brother, whose personality, deeds and discourses pushed her into a political struggle in which she did little more than publicising his views and parroting back his words, without a mention of her personal convictions. Nevertheless she worked tirelessly by her brother's side, allegedly for the cause's sake, managing responsibilities that increased with his marriage. Her effort gained her the title of 'men's sister', a nickname by which her brother's comrades 'bestowed on her the honour of acknowledging their brotherly love',[546] an expression that betrays the sense of superiority these men had towards her, whom they regarded as an inferior who deserved a little appreciation for the slave labour she always performed without complaining. The appellative 'men's sister' was also a way to attest that she belonged to the political brotherhood that reserved for her the modern role of 'political servant' that replaced the traditional 'domestic servant' role. To transform her sister into his 'political servant' the brother uses a calculated, subtle, organised, not violent subjection technique, which is the discipline of political work. He imposes on

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[544] Daisy al-Amīr. *Al-Bayt al-ᶜArabī al-Saᶜīd.* (Bayrūt: Dār al-ᶜAwdah, 1975), p. 7.
[545] 'She was influenced by his discourses, believed in his works, became enthusiastic about his strong personality, and started propagandising for his opinions and repeating his words'. *Ibid.* p. 7.
[546] *Ibid.* p. 8.

her activities, work rhythm and bodily appearance that the discipline of political work requires (in his opinion), and he increases her subjection.[547] He achieves both aims through the strict control of her activities and appearance and by assigning to her tasks gradually growing in complexity. He disapproves of his sister and doubts her intellectual maturity for having her future read in a coffee cup. He opposes the idea of his sister taking a de-stressing holiday as advised by a doctor for fear of being labelled 'bourgeois' by others. He dislikes the eventuality that his sister's embellished appearance could attract one of his comrades. He increases her responsibilities so that he can spend more time with his son.[548] His sister is simultaneously object and instrument of such power, as Foucault would say it.[549] She is power's object when she does not react to her brother's reprimand for the divination episode and to his objection to her holiday. She is power's instrument when she initially refuses the doctor's advice, since she considers rest a luxury contrasting with her political responsibilities, because she allows power to play upon herself and hence cooperates in her own subjection. She has interiorised the image of 'the fighter's sister' her brother wants for her and keeps normalising herself to that image by her behaviours.[550] Interiorisation aside, she is conscious of being constantly closely monitored:

> وتساءلت ما كان يحدث لو وقفت امام المرآة تتبرج كما تفعل زوجة أخيها ؟ قال جدها : انها زوجة ويجب ان تتزين لزوجها لترضيه ، اما انت فهل ترضين ان تتزيني لاصدقاء أخيك ؟ وماذا يقول الناس لو اهتم بك أحد هؤلاء ؟ ولو .. ولو لا سمح الله ، قال أخوها ، أحبك واحد منهم ، فهذا معناه انني اشركتك في مهمتنا الوطنية لاجد لك زوجا . انت محصنة ضد كل هذا بتصرفك الرصين وكفاك فخرا انك اخت الرجال ... وضحك فرحا : أليس كذلك يا عمة رفيق ؟ [551]

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[547] See Introduction pp. 17, 19-20 for the Foucault's subjection techniques and discipline.
[548] See al-Amīr. *Al-Bayt al-ᶜArabī al-Saᶜīd*, p. 9 for the first and third episode, p. 6 for the second, p. 8 for the fourth.
[549] See Introduction p. 19.
[550] This is a 'political version' of Susan Bordo's idea (see *Ibid.*p. 39): instead of the culturally prevalent image of femininity, the protagonist has interiorised the brother's image of politically committed sister.
[551] 'She asked herself what would have happened if she stood in front of a mirror to bejewel herself as her brother's wife does? Her grandfather said: "She is a wife, she must embellish herself to please her husband; but you, are you happy to embellish yourself for your brother's friends? What would people say if one of them became interested in you?" "And if.. and if, God

She knows she cannot do anything without her family knowing it. Her grandfather and her brother comment even on such a trivial matter like that of embellishment, which indicate how she is actually (not just potentially) always under her overseers' gaze in a *Panoptical* society in which anyone is an overseer. A woman must have informed her brother of the divination episode, because that was a meeting for women only. People are a constant presence throughout the story.[552] The regulations her overseers have set for her differ from those established for married women, although both emanate from and benefit men. The grandfather considers embellishment appropriate and compulsory ('she must embellish herself') only when it aims at pleasing husbands, regardless of wives' likings. The protagonist's embellishment is inappropriate because she is unmarried and the only men she could please are her brother's friends, something which would made people gossip. The grandfather does not consider that she could embellish herself for her own aesthetical pleasure. In his traditional patriarchal view women are functions of men; they cannot do anything for themselves.

The brother's discourse is not as traditional as the grandfather's, although as selfish, since he considers the eventuality that one of his friends could fall in love with his sister as a stain for his political reputation, which could be tarnished by the suspect that he has introduced his sister to politics in order to marry her off. The thought that his sister could be glad to find a suitor among his friends does not occur to him. On the contrary his 'God forbid' indicates that this eventuality is for him a mishap and it must be so for his sister as well, because as her master he knows what she wants better than she does. He is sure that her poised behaviour will protect her from the 'misadventure' of a love story with one of his friends, something that he is sure she does not need, because she is fully satisfied by her honourable position of 'men's sister'. He has just drawn up a personal life programme for his sister,

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forbid, one of them loved you, this would mean that I made you participate in our national mission to find you a husband." said her brother. "You are immunized against all this by your poised behaviour and it suffices you as a honour that you are men's sister"
... He laughed happily: "Is it not so, ᶜAmmat Rafīq?"' Al-Amīr. *Al-Bayt al-ᶜArabī al-Saᶜīd*, p. 9. ᶜAmmat Rafīq is the *kunyah* she acquired when her brother's first son was born.

[552] 'The people' or 'the others' are mentioned in *Ibid.* once on p. 6, 9, 10, 12; twice on p. 7, 13, 14.

which adds to the political activities he imposes on her, so that disciplinary power can indiscreetly reach into every corner of her life, guarantee her subjection to him as 'political servant' and prevent her from performing activities that could damage his political stature. This is a modern version of the traditional logic attributing to women the responsibility to uphold familial honour by behaving as per patriarchs' instructions. The brother laughs happily asking for his sister's approval, because he knows that she will not contradict him; in fact the protagonist does not respond, giving the impression that she agrees with her brother and cooperating in guaranteeing her subordination to him.

For supporting her brother's political activities the protagonist forsakes more than a potential love life:

هي ، كانت تدري ان القضية اهم من اية مغريات بشرية ، وقاطعت لاجل هذا عوالم النساء ، فـــلا ارتيـــاد لصالونات حلاقة أو دار ازياء او تجول في الاسواق او زيارات سياحية ، هذه عوالم تضييع الوقت وهي تدري أهمية الوقـــت في العمل ، [553]

Because she considers political engagements more important than other activities that used to lure her, like shopping, visiting friends, going to the hairdresser, etc., ᶜAmmat Rafīq abandons those activities, which now she regards with some presumption as ways to waste time because they distract her from her role of full time assistant of her brother. In a sort of self-imposed discipline she abandons all non-political activities, which has deep implications for her social life. She does not simply utilise her time more efficiently, 'she broke off with women's worlds', i.e. she eliminates the common grounds on which she had built friendly relationships with the women who were sharing those non-political activities with her, hence severing all friendship bonds. The just quoted passage is positioned in the narrative just after the paragraph in which the narrator recounts how her brother's comrades nicknamed her 'men's sister', as if to show a causal link between the two events. To be admitted in

[553] 'She knew that the cause was more important than any human lures and for it she broke off with women's worlds. No visits to hairdressers or to dress shops, no strolling in markets or morning visits. «These worlds are time wasters and she knows the importance of time when working».' *Ibid.* p. 8.

the political brotherhood and its 'crucial' activities, which make her feel important,[554] she leaves the sisterhood of the women living around her and their trivial activities. Consequently she finds herself isolated from the women's community and belittled and exploited within a men's community. Her isolation allows her brother to fully control her,[555] because she has no possible allies to stop his exploitation, of which she is not conscious until she goes on holiday:

ولاول مرة وجدت نفسهـا تسال : اخوهـــا نذر نفسه للقضية ، وهي ؟ هي نذرت نفسها لمن ؟ للقضية أم لاخيها ؟ [556]

« ما معنى ان لا تنادى باسمها ؟ ابعد كل هذا النضـال ونكران الـــذات والتضحية لم تتوصل حتـــى ان 'تسمّى باسمها ؟ » ٠

« اتراه شرفا ان لا تكـون امرأة ؟ فقط ؟ لم هي اخت الرجال ؟ ولم هي عمة طفل وليست ٠٠ وليست زوجة رجل؟» ٠

[..] تأملت من حولها ٠٠ هناك طاولات عليها رجال واخرى عليها نساء وثالثة عليها من الجنسين « وهي ٠٠ هي وحدها لا تدري الى أي من الجنسين تنتمي » ٠ [557]

'She finds herself asking' conveys the idea that this self-questioning springs involuntarily and brings to the surface of the protagonist's consciousness for the first time after years of political engagement the issue of who benefits from her devotion. This means that she has never realised before how exploitative her brother is towards her, because at home she is fully immersed in a society in which female exploitation is an integral part of the system. Now that she is temporarily out of that system, can witness different lifestyles, has time and breathing space to ponder on her personal situation, she finally questions what until then she has not even noticed. She wonders why despite all her self-sacrifice she is not even called by her name, without

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[554] See al-Amīr. *Al-Bayt al-ᶜArabī al-Saᶜīd*, pp. 12-3 in which she boasts about her role within the organisation and the pride she takes in her role, whose importance she exaggerates.

[555] See Introduction p. 20 for Foucault's reflection about isolation as a discipline tool.

[556] 'For the first time she found herself asking: her brother devoted himself to the cause, and her? To whom did she devote herself? To the cause or to her brother?' Al-Amīr. *Al-Bayt al-ᶜArabī al-Saᶜīd*, p. 13.

[557] '«What does it mean the fact that she is not called by her name? After all this fight, self-denial and sacrifice she did not achieve even to be called by her name?».
«Is it an honour not to be a woman? Only? Why is she men's sister? Why is she a child's aunt and not.. and not a man's wife?».
[..] She looked around her.. At some tables there were men, at others there were women and at others yet there were both sexes «and she .. she on her own does not know to which sex she belongs».' *Ibid.* p. 11.

realising that it is precisely because she has denied her self that she has lost her name, i.e. what denotes her individuality, and with it her individual subjectivity. Instead of her own name she has been given nicknames that relate her to males because she has been absorbed in the male-dominated political world, in which her female individual subjectivity has been obliterated for the 'common' (i.e. male) good and hence she has no proper name.

In order to admit her to his world and have her at his service her brother has induced her to forsake not only her name but also her femininity with all that implies (the possibility of marriage, motherhood, female friends, etc.). This agrees with the sexist ideology of patriarchy that requires women to become sexless beings if they want to be considered men's equals, otherwise they remain inferior females, as de Beauvoir has expounded.[558] The protagonist questions for the first time if not to be a woman is really an honour, and admits that she has lost her sense of belonging to a sex. By repudiating her femininity she has mutilated herself and hence lost her sense of belonging to a community of women, i.e. her communal subjectivity, a loss that adds to her loss of individual subjectivity. She feels split between the two sexes without belonging to any, caught in the fragmentation of her self:

صوت ارتفع · اكتشفت بعد لحظة انـه صوتها وانهـا
تنادي · وجاءها النادل · طلبت منه كأس نبيذ · [559]

The voice is presented nearly as an autonomous being that has slipped out of the unaware protagonist's lips. She needs a moment to realise that that voice is hers, as if she could not recognise it as such, as if it emanated from a fragment of her self dissociated from her normalised self, successfully escaping her self-normalising control and hence enabling the protagonist's transgression. Although she is compelled to ascertain that nobody around her watches or knows her,[560] accustomed as she is to live in a *Panoptical* society, the mere fact that she is able to transgress once unwatched means that she is

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[558] See Introduction p. 49.
[559] 'A voice rose. After a moment she discovered that it was her voice and that she was calling. The waiter came. She ordered a glass of wine from him.' Al-Amīr. *Al-Bayt al-ᶜArabī al-Saᶜīd*, p. 12.
[560] She looks around four times to check in *Ibid.* pp. 13-4.

still able to resist and hence she is not fully 'the principle of [her] own subjection'.[561]

The narrative structure of this story mirrors the power relations among the characters. The only words uttered by a woman are the six words with which the mother informs the protagonist of the father's decision to break off her engagement,[562] acting as the patriarch's spokesperson. Men are those who speak and hence control discourse (also in the Foucauldian sense). The protagonist is completely deprived of voice, leaving the narration in the hands of a heterodiegetic narrator, a narrative technique that reflects ᶜAmmat Rafīq's lack of control on her life, which she leaves in her brother's hands. Nevertheless ᶜAmmat Rafīq's intimate reflections, emotions and interiority in general find expression in sections of the narrative isolated by guillemets, as in quotes 553 and 557 above, which I interpret as asides of the narrator and implicitly of the protagonist.[563]

To conclude both protagonists are subjects 'subdued to the other by control and dependence', to use one of Foucault's definitions,[564] but their levels of consciousness and responses to subjection are different. The orphan is conscious of being controlled by and dependent on her relatives from the start, wishes and strives to escape subjection until she surrenders, crushed by her marginality. ᶜAmmat Rafīq's first consciousness of being controlled by and dependent on her brother only appears while abroad. She ponders at length over it, but as O'Connor's Hamlet, she 'merely sits back and monologizes',[565] the only practical effect being the order of a glass of wine.

Both protagonists are apart from their communities and treated as inferiors, but for different reasons. The orphan is disparaged by her uncle's family despite her attempts to belong to the family and she is painfully aware that even her dear ones treat her as an inferior. Despite being individualised, rather than seeking distinction, she is an outcast who wishes to create her own

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[561] See Introduction p. 21 for Foucault's quote; here [her] replaces [his].
[562] Al-Amīr. *Al-Bayt al-ᶜArabī al-Saᶜīd*, p. 8.
[563] This is another example of Barthes' 'système personnel du récit'; see note 540 p. 169 for reference.
[564] See Introduction p. 12.
[565] O'Connor. *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

self as Hafez indicates.[566] The sister instead believes that her political activities make her more important than other women and superior to those typically feminine activities she defines time-wasters, hence she seeks distinction from other women and excludes herself from the female community to enter the political brotherhood, in which she loses her distinction to end up treated as an inferior by her male comrades. This involuntary or voluntary marginalisation causes both protagonists' subjective decentredness, as Harper has indicated,[567] because they do not enjoy the intersubjective reciprocal equal relationships they need in order to develop their subjectivities, as I have previously explained.[568]

2) Badriyyah al-Bishr

Badriyyah al-Bishr was born in 1965 in Riyadh, where she completed her undergraduate studies and her master degree, both in literature and sociology, at King Saud University; she obtained her doctorate from the American University of Beirut in 2005. Her various employments as journalist for several newspapers, such as *al-Riyāḍ* and *Al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ*, as sociologist in a Riyadh hospital, and currently as lecturer in King Saud University's Social Studies Department, have been accompanied by her diverse literary production,[569] among which short stories that have attracted very little critical attention.

In her short stories al-Bishr assigns key roles to female characters, who in *Masā' al-Arbiᶜā'* (Wednesday Night)[570] are the only protagonists and in *Ḥabbat al-Hāl* (The Cardamom Pod) are mostly protagonists or important characters beside the three male protagonists. Most stories have open

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[566] See above pp. 57-8 for Hafez' elaborations about distinction and search for chosen identity.
[567] Harper. *Op. cit.*, pp. 27-9.
[568] See above p. 159.
[569] See bibliography for details.
[570] This collection is commented upon in an interview al-Abṭaḥ has conducted with the author; see Sūsan al-Abṭaḥ (20/10/2003): "Badriyyah al-Bishr: Ladaynā ᶜAshar Kātibāt ka-l-ᶜAṣāfīr mā an Yantabih Aḥad Latt Ghirrīdihā ḥattā Yabda' bi-l-Taḥrīḍ ᶜalā Iṣṭiyādihā aw Rajmihā". WWW document, URL: http://www.jehat.com/Jehaat/ar/Ghareeb/badreya.htm, retrieved on 08/04/2008.

endings and successfully shun sentimentalism and melodrama by avoiding emotive language and resorting to a light tone and narrators that can maintain a certain detachment from the events, features typical of the Saudi writers of al-Bishr's generation.[571]

Masā' al-Arbiᶜā' focuses mainly on unhappy bourgeois marriages in which the spouses lead separate lives, because wives are relegated to an internal world of work, domestic chores, children and soap operas while husbands live in an external world of work and recreational activities in which they amiably entertain other women, reserving indifference and arrogance, or even rudeness and harshness, for their wives when they return home late at night. All stories of *Masā' al-Arbiᶜā'* have urban settings, while all stories of *Ḥabbat al-Hāl* but one take place in small towns and villages of the Najd region, settings for stories that merge realism and fancy to give al-Bishr's style a tint of magic realism according to Khālid al-Yūsuf.[572] Most of the characters of this collection are young women victims of social pressure and familial violence and subjection or violent, subjecting older women. Sīmūn Naṣṣār underlines that al-Bishr condemns the way Saudi society exerts its power on women without falling into the exaggerations of feminist literature. She creates female characters that rebel against their negative reality calmly and silently, without screams or open revolution. She exposes the secrets of Saudi society and family that have remained anchored to traditions that predate oil economy.[573]

I have chosen the first story under scrutiny "Al-Dhi'b" (The Wolf) because it is the only story of *Masā' al-Arbiᶜā'* in which a wife practically rejects her unhappy marriage. It opens with a paralipsis: the protagonist announces to her mother that she cannot bear her marriage any longer and wants to divorce. What has induced her to such decision soon unfolds in a two-page

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[571] See pp. 89-92 above for the Saudi literary context.

[572] Khālid al-Yūsuf, (19/10/2005): "Badriyyah al-Bishr wa Rā'iḥat al-Wāqiᶜiyyah". WWW document, URL: http://www.arabicstory.net/forum/index.php?showtopic=3492, retrieved on 08/04/2008. See above p. 95 for magic realism.

[573] Naṣṣār, Sīmūn (07/02/2004): «"Ḥabbat al-Hāl" al-Majmūᶜah al-Qaṣaṣiyyah al-Akhīrah li-l-Suᶜūdiyyah Badriyyah al-Bishr». WWW document, URL: http://www.nashiri.net/content/view/894/10032/, retrieved on 08/07/2008.

analepsis[574] in which she describes her husband's jealousy, his constant surveillance of her every move (which is limited to a few visits to relatives), his malicious interrogations, his spying on her when she entertains guests, the disabling segregation he imposes on her.

عندما خرج [..] تعطّلت كلّ
الحواس الحيّة فيّ، وصار الجدار الّذي أمامي هو الجدار
الوحيد الّذي أرسم فيه خيالات العالم الخارجي. [575]

The protagonist is left at home in a segregation that dulls her senses to the point that they cease to function. Her imagination remains alive instead, allowing her to use her house walls as a screen on which to project her fantasies about the outside world, into which Aḥmad has just disappeared and from which she is on the contrary excluded, and hence left only with the possibility to imagine it. Leaving his wife at home with their daughter Hayfā', Aḥmad has holidays on his own or with his friends, during which he 'entertains' other women, as witnessed by the protagonist's sisters who, unlike her, go on holiday with their husbands.[576] He leads and imposes on his family a life of hypocritical double standards, allowing himself unrestrained freedom of movement and licentiousness and confining his wife and daughter to constant surveillance and seclusion even by his mere absence from home, since they live in a country in which unaccompanied women have extremely restricted mobility.[577] With the help of the whole Saudi social structure Aḥmad can easily make of the family home a smaller prison within 'the big prison'.[578] When he is at home he plays the part of the overseer, otherwise a relative or the whole society takes over the role, making the overseer's gaze a constant, factual, rather than potential, presence that does not even need to be interiorised, as Foucault theorised.[579] Nevertheless this draconian surveillance does not

[574] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, pp. 82,92-3 for definitions of analepsis and paralipsis.
[575] 'When he went out [..] all the senses alive in me ceased to function; the wall in front of me became the only wall on which I drew the fantasies of the external world.' Badriyyah al-Bishr. *Masā' al-Arbi'ā': Qiṣaṣ Qaṣīrah.* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ādāb, 1994), pp. 97-8.
[576] *Ibid.* p. 98.
[577] For more details on this subject see Arebi. *Op. cit.*, pp. 17-20, 285.
[578] This is how Arebi defines Saudi society in *Ibid.* p. 156; she also mentions the existence in Saudi Arabia of 'a version of Bentham's Panopticon model of constant surveillance' on p. 297.
[579] See Introduction pp. 20-1.

dishearten the protagonist who, when Aḥmad is ready to leave her and Hayfā' for another holiday, decides to confront him:

هذه المرّة قلت: لن تسافر لوحدك..!
ركل حقيبتي الّتي جهّزتها فوقعت وتكسّر معها جليد صبري.
قال: هل تريدين أن آخذك بصحبة أبو أحمد وأبو سيف؟.
حريم آخر زمن.
قلت: نسافر معاً بدونهم.
قال ساخراً: لا أقول لهم أحسن (عيت) على مرتي هاه.
حمل حقيبته.. حملت حقيبتي اتّجهت نحو الباب قلت:
إذن إلى بيت أهلي.
خرج قبلي وصفق الباب [580]

The protagonist has prepared everything with the intent to oblige Aḥmad to take her with him, putting herself in the position to impose her presence on him rather than begging him not to leave her behind, as her first sentence shows. Aḥmad's response to her resolute attitude is controlled in his words, but aggressive in his gestures. He asks a rhetorical question, to which he knows the answer can only be negative, and comments sarcastically about the harem of modern times in order to ridicule her decision to travel with him. Meanwhile he kicks her bag, which betrays how irked he is by her confrontational attitude. When he realises that she does not relent, he resorts to his ironic 'I better tell them that my wife prevented me' and picks up only his bag, evidently trying to cut the conversation and leave her behind as planned. He is once again faced by the fierce resistance of the protagonist, who prefers to return to her parents' house rather than to be abandoned once again; he responds this time by slamming the door behind him and in her face. The

[580] 'This time I said: You will not travel on your own..!
He kicked my bag, which I had prepared, and it fell; the ice of my patience broke with it.
He said: Do you want me to take you with me accompanied by Abū Aḥmad and Abū Sayf?. A harem of modern times.
I said: We will travel together without them.
He said ironically: I better tell them that my wife prevented me, is that it?
He carried his bag.. I carried my bag, directed towards the door, and said: To my family's house then.
He went out before me and slammed the door behind him'. Al-Bishr. *Op. cit.*, pp. 98-9.

protagonist is not intimidated by Aḥmad's dismissive and aggressive responses; her rebuff of his power's constraints reaches the extreme of separation, refusing until the end to be 'the principle of [her] own subjection'.[581]

Her decision meets her father's silence and her mother's disapproval:

ـ أنت من دون إخواتك عنيدة وقليلة صبر، ماذا يعني رجل
ويريد أن يسافر؟ هل ستمنعين الرجل من السّفر أم ستبقين
هكذا قبالتي مثل الحظ العاثر؟

صمتّ.. كان الحديث قد انفرط حتّى آخره في دمي وصار
شجر الكلام أصفر واهياً يتساقط ميتاً إذا ما قفزت فوقه قطّة
شقيّة كابنتي (هيفاء) ويبكي. [582]

By setting the protagonist apart from her sisters with two negative qualitative adjectives first and by qualifying her as 'misfortune' later, the mother aims at making her feel not up to her sisters' level, at pushing her into the inferior position in their unequal relation, so that the mother can exercise power over her[583] and easily denigrate her reasons for a separation. She can only comprehend that her daughter pretends to prevent her husband from travelling, whereas she aims at impeding his affairs and her seclusion, which the mother considers unreasonable because travel is one of Aḥmad's fundamental rights as a man. The mother does not comment on the affairs Aḥmad has during his travels or on his spying on her daughter, probably and implicitly considering them too part of his 'unofficial' male prerogatives.

After much confrontation with Aḥmad, the protagonist has no verbal response for her mother, because all her words have dispersed. Here the narrator introduces for the first time the beautiful metaphor of the tree, which, I believe, refers to herself.[584] The many words she had used to confront Aḥmad, which make of her a 'tree of words', dry up and become as useless as a dead

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[581] I am paraphrasing Foucault's sentence; [her] replaces 'his'; see Introduction p. 21.

[582] '- Apart from all your sisters, you are stubborn and impatient; what is wrong with a man who wants to travel? Will you forbid men to travel or will you remain like this in front of me like misfortune?
I remained silent.. All words, up until the very last, had already dispersed in my blood; the tree of words became yellow and weak, it crashed down dead when a poor she-cat like my daughter (Hayfā') jumped on it, and it cried.' Al-Bishr. *Op. cit.*, p. 99.

[583] This is the mechanism underlying power relations; see Introduction p.17.

[584] I base my interpretation on the several appearances of this image within this short story, of which one will be shown later, and on the drawing introducing the story, for which see appendix.

trunk when she reflects on the miserable fate of Hayfā', who has been taken away from her home and will grow up without her father, maintained by her grandfather and with limited financial resources. Faced with such perspective the only thing the protagonist can do is to cry for Hayfā', whose vulnerability is accentuated by the simile of the poor she-cat.

The protagonist's mother soon starts exerting pressure to convince her daughter to recant:

أمّي تصرّ أن أعود لزوجي حتّى لو اضطررت لمسح حذائه
بدموعي، بينما هو يمسح أحذية الرّاقصات [585]

Despite being informed of Aḥmad's licentious behaviour, the mother wishes her daughter's return to him even if this requires her to wipe his shoes with her tears. With this peculiar image the mother conveys her opinion on the separation. The tears refer to the sorrow her daughter should feel for a separation that she considers a mistake. Wiping the shoes is a gesture of utter humiliation and subjection through which she should try to obtain Aḥmad's forgiveness for her mistake. In brief, the mother blames her daughter for the separation and considers Aḥmad wronged. She insists on her return to him, i.e. she uses a strategy to try to determine her daughter's conduct[586] and to impose on her daughter an idea of femininity that implies the wife's complete subjection to the husband and the acceptance of any behaviour from his part. The mother has surely inherited such idea, 'artificially defined by customs and fashions'[587] of the past, from her own mother. Now she wants to transmit it to her daughter through a similar process, without being aware that she is acting as a channel through which power passes and on which it relies to reach and subject her daughter.[588] The mother has not considered though that the concept of femininity she advocates has been outdated by concepts recent fashions have generated, to which her daughter subscribes and which induce her to resist her mother's insistence and not to return to her husband.

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[585] '..my mother insists that I return to my husband even if I am obliged to wipe his shoes with my tears, while he wipes the shoes of loose women'. Al-Bishr. *Op. cit.*, p. 99.
[586] This is the Foucauldian definition of power relation; see Introduction p. 18.
[587] De Beauvoir's definition; see *Ibid.* p. 50.
[588] See *Ibid.* p. 17 for Foucault's reflections about the exercise of power.

Although the protagonist does not subscribe to her mother's traditional femininity norms, she is uneasy about her situation of woman distinguished from other women because of divorce, which she bears with the sole support of her friend Hayā. When Khālid, Hayā's husband, enquires about Aḥmad, she does not reply, leaving to Hayā the task to inform him of the separation, as if ashamed of it. Khālid's reaction increases her awkwardness even further. He keeps observing her through the rear-view mirror, inducing her to be silent, while '[she] pant[s] for [her] branches to stay solid and not to break'.[589] Khālid's examining gaze[590] punishes her for her separation 'that is inadequate to the rule'[591] and successfully normalises her by reducing her to silence. The metaphor of the tree might here suggest that for the protagonist the position of divorcee and object subjected to the gaze[592] is so uneasy that she struggles to keep her emotions/nerves firm. She is still a subject conditioned by social customs that have instilled in her the idea that a divorced woman is devalued, hence her uneasiness.[593] Khālid's gaze also hints at his hidden intentions, which become clear when he calls at midnight, while Hayā is sleeping, asking the protagonist to 'talk a little'.[594]

وضعت السمّاعة وبكيت، لأنّني كنت خائفة من قصّة ليلى الوحيدة في الغابة.. نظرت نحو اللّوحة.. كانت الغابة واسعة ومخيفة وعيون الشّجر ترقبني برأفة وتهمس: اختبئي!

فتحت جذع الشّجرة ودخلت وقرّرت أن أنام فيها حتّى يغادر الذّئب.[595]

The protagonist hangs up and cries because she is scared of becoming prey of 'the wolf' like Laylā[596] now that she is 'lonely'. Considering that she

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[589] Al-Bishr. *Op. cit.,* p. 100. The sentence in the short story is in the first person singular; I have put it in the third person singular to suit my text.
[590] See note 530 p. 165 for definition.
[591] Foucault's words; see Introduction p. 21.
[592] For Foucault examination 'manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected'; see *Ibid.* p. 21.
[593] This is the female subject theorised by de Beauvoir; see *Ibid.* p. 51.
[594] Al-Bishr. *Op. cit.,* pp. 101-2.
[595] 'I put the receiver down and I cried, because I was afraid of the story of Laylā lonely in the woods.. I looked towards the painting.. The woods were large and scary and trees' eyes observed me with tenderness and whispered: Hide!
I opened the tree trunk, entered and decided to sleep in it until the wolf left.' *Ibid.* p. 102.
[596] Arabic version of Little Red Riding Hood; for readings that consider the wolf in this fairytale the symbol of a man, here Khālid, see ttp://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Red_Riding_Hood.

lives with her birth family, 'lonely' refers to her situation of separated woman, i.e. without her husband's guardianship, whose essentialness Saudi *ᶜulamā'* maintain in their discourse,[597] which she must have interiorised to feel lonely when she is actually only 'husband-less', a condition that nonetheless makes of her a potential sexual prey. In her solitude even the woods of the painting, which could symbolise society at large, are scary and once again she is observed, but the trees' observation is not Khālid's examining gaze, because those trees observe her tenderly and give her indications on how to escape Khālid. Having seen the previous uses of the tree image recurring in this story,[598] those tender trees might represent women in general and the tree trunk she enters might symbolise the feminine community's bosom or the protagonist's self into which she withdraws to find refuge from Khālid, whom she refuses to confront because she is no longer confident. The confidence with which she confronted Aḥmad has been crushed by the consciousness of the social devaluation separation entails, which has transformed her into a subject that is still resistant, since she does not break down under Khālid's examination, nor does she become his prey, but who now prefers to beat a retreat rather than confronting.

From *Ḥabbat al-Hāl* I have chosen "Al-Muṭawwiᶜ",[599] because it describes very carefully the mechanisms of subjection in place within a family. The word *muṭawwiᶜ* could be interpreted in two ways: being the present participle masculine of the verb *ṭawwaᶜa*, it literally means 'a subjecting man'; in Saudi Arabia it is also used to indicate the religious police that enforces compliance

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[597] Saudi *ᶜulamā'* in their discourse underline women's fragility, lack, «"natural" propensity for perversion», which make male guardianship necessary; see Arebi. *Op. cit.*, pp. 2, 18. This seems a moral version of Foucault's hysterization strategy: they characterise women as having an intrinsic 'moral pathology' and establish an essential female sexual identity that they use, as Bailey states, to limit women's possibilities; see Introduction pp. 25, 37.

[598] Apart from the single tree as a metaphor of the protagonist mentioned on pp. 182-3 above, there is also a simile between trees (plural) and a mother's bosom in al-Bishr. *Op. cit.*, p. 101.

[599] This short story's plot is briefly summarised in Jarīdah al-Riyāḍ al-Yawmiyyah (February 2004): "Badriyyah al-Bishr Tuṭliqu Rā'iḥat al-Hāl fī Ajwā' Najd ᶜabra Majmūᶜatihā Qaṣaṣiyyah al-Akhīrah". WWW document, URL: http://www.alriyadh.com/Contents/24-02-2004/Mainpage/Thkafa_10449.php, retrieved on 07/04/2008. Naṣṣār indicates how reality and illusion are fused together in this story, in which al-Bishr demonstrates that the world of illusion and ignorance of the pre-oil period has survived unchanged the economic and political evolution brought by oil; see Naṣṣār. *Op. cit.*

to Islamic prescriptions. Since there is no mention of such police in the text, while subjecting characters abound, the title could be considered in its literal meaning. Such title could also be playing with the double meaning of the word to subtly indicate that Munīrah's relatives are her personal policing force. Orphaned of her father's tenderness too early,[600] Munīrah has been living a very conflictual relationship with her mother, who is the channel through which neopatriarchal power passes to reach and oppress her.[601] She has always overtly favoured her son, whom she has always addressed since his childhood with kindness and poise, because he is 'the man of the house [who] could not be neglected'[602] and the guarantor of her old-age security, whose loyalty she must continuously nurture.[603] Instead she cannot hold a conversation with Munīrah, but only harshly order her about with her gloomy voice. Also the relationship between Munīrah and her brother is conflictual[604] and he replicates his mother's belittling attitude towards Munīrah neglecting her will:

ورغم أنّه يصغرني بسنتين إلاّ أنّ الشيخ يوم زواجي
جعله وليّ أمري، ووضع يده في يد زوجي الذي كان يكبرني
بعشرين سنة وأرغمني على زواجي منه.[605]

In these lines a fully-fledged force relation is described: by nominating her younger brother her guardian, the shaykh deprives Munīrah of any legal capacity to take decisions, handing such capacity over to her brother. By so doing her will is completely overridden in order to avoid her opposition to the marriage, which has been forced upon her by her brother and mother, although the latter has no active role in the ceremony. The only agents in the ceremony are the shaykh, the brother and the husband, three variants of the neopatriarch, 'the center around which the national as well as the natural family are organized'. This wedding provides a perfect occasion for the

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[600] Munīrah recalls and yearns for her father's tenderness; see Badriyyah al-Bishr. *Ḥabbat al-Hāl: Qiṣaṣ*. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ādāb, 2004), p. 40.
[601] See Introduction p. 17 for Foucault's power mechanisms; Sharabi. *Op. cit.*, p. 8 for neopatriarchy definition; al-Bishr. *Ḥabbat al-Hāl*, p. 36 for the conflicts with the mother.
[602] Al-Bishr. *Ḥabbat al-Hāl*, p. 36; [who] is my addiction.
[603] See Kandiyoti. 'Bargaining with Patriarchy', p. 279 for the relationship women-sons.
[604] See al-Bishr. *Ḥabbat al-Hāl*, p. 37 for a reference to their quarrels.
[605] 'Despite him being two years my junior, the day of my marriage the shaykh made him my guardian, put his hand in the hand of my husband, who was twenty years my senior, and forced me to marry him.' *Ibid.* p. 36.

imposition of the neopatriarch's will, since it contains both tools of imposition, i.e. the coercion exerted on Munīrah and the ritual element of the marriage ceremony.[606] Munīrah is therefore trapped in a force relation because any possibility to resist this imposition is denied to her.[607] The people who should be caring for her, i.e. her mother and brother, are the people who have initiated the imposition, and the shaykh, who should require both parties' consent to the marriage,[608] is instead sanctioning and enabling the imposition. None of the 'main actors' of this ceremony perceives the wedding as an imposition or has any concern for Munīrah's unexpressed feelings and opinions, since vertical relations, and the ensuing belittlement of younger[609] and/or female members of the community, are the rule within neopatriarchy. Munīrah continues to experience such belittlement on both her brother's side and her husband's during her troubled marriage:

لم يصدّقني في كلّ المرّات التي
شكوت فيها من ضرب زوجي لي، ومعاشرته نساء ساقطات،
حتّى دخل ذات يوم بيتي، وأطفالي يستنجدون به، ليراه ورائحته
تفوح بالخمر، يمسح بجسدي الطويل جدران البيت، ويمشي
بحذائه على رأسي. سحبني أخي من الأرض ودفع عجوزي
نحو الجدار، أسقطته هذه الدفعة أرضًا ثمّ أخذني معه، لحق بي
صغاري، إلاّ أنّه أبعدهم عنّي، شتمهم وشتم أباهم الذي ألقى
بلقاحهم في أرضي، ثمّ قال:
اذهبوا!
610

The brother did not believe Munīrah's complaints about the violence and betrayals she endured, which he disregarded as his inferior sister's prattle. Only when he personally witnesses the husband's beatings he believes her

606 See Sharabi. *Op. cit.*, p. 7-8 for the quoted definition of neopatriarch and the relations existing in neopatriarchal societies.
607 See Introduction p. 18 for the Foucauldian definition of force relation.
608 See Arebi. *Op. cit.*, p. 164 for the Wahhābī position regarding arranged marriages.
609 The position of the brother is an exception: he is young, but he is the father's substitute, hence he is given a prominent position.
610 'He [my brother] did not believe me all the times I complained about my husband beating me and associating with fallen women, until one day he entered my house, while my children asked him for help, and saw him, smelling of wine, wiping the house walls with my long body and stepping over my head with his shoes. My brother pulled me up from the floor, pushed my old man towards the wall, with a push that made him fall to the ground, and took me with him; my little ones followed me, but he moved them away from me, cursed them, cursed their father who had thrown his sperm into my land, then said [to them]:
Go away!' Al-Bishr. *Ḥabbat al-Hāl*, p. 37.

and takes a course of action that still treats her as inferior because he never asks for her opinion or consent. He separates Munīrah from her children, whom he curses and chases away, insensitive to the distress of both mother and children. He takes no action against his brother-in-law, whose cruel behaviour towards Munīrah is not punished. Here Munīrah is once again trapped between a violent husband and an overbearing brother, with now the added responsibility of her children and no visible strategy to simultaneously resist both men's pressure and meet her children's needs and her own. Without expressing any objection, she is separated from her children and taken in by her brother, starting a long and difficult cohabitation with her mother, who also lives in her brother's house.

> ذراع أمّي القويّة تهزّني بعنف.. [..] كانت تطالني حيثما أكون، وأنا أعدو كأرنب مذعور، لأفرّ منها، لكن ضفيرتي الطويلة كانت هدفًا سهل الصيد، لأنّ يد أمّي تمتدّ سريعًا وتقبض على طرف ضفيرتي، وتلفّ رأسي نحو كفّها الأخرى، ثمّ تهبط بها على فمي، وتعصره، لتخمد الصراخ الذي انطلق من ألم قرصتها الحارّة لفخذي، وكلّما تفلت جسدي منها ضربتني حيثما وقعت يداها [611]

Munīrah has passed from her husband's overt and brutal violence to her mother's slyer and more discreet violence, that is perpetrated quickly and furtively through less blatantly obvious techniques that can be overlooked, which suggests the mother's intent to keep her brutality unnoticed, hence she suffocates Munīrah's screams. The mother's covertness indicates that she is ashamed of such violence, which is not linked to arguments or drunkenness as in the case of Munīrah's husband, but seems to be her daily way to relate to Munīrah. While it is difficult to judge how the husband used violence, because his drunkenness eliminates the element of intentionality that is fundamental in power relations,[612] the quote's last sentence indicates that the mother's violence with its discreetness and omnipresence is not a punishment

[611] 'My mother's strong arm harshly shakes me.. [..] she could reach me wherever I was, while I ran like a scared rabbit to escape her; but my long braid was a target easy to catch, because my mother's hand stretched quickly, grabbed the end of my braid, turned my head towards the palm of her other hand and then landed with it on my mouth, pressing it to suffocate the scream caused by the pain of her strong pinch to my thigh; every time my body escaped her she struck me wherever her hands reached'. *Ibid.* p. 35.

[612] See Introduction p. 18 for intentionality in power relations.

method, but a method of discipline through which the mother can: affect Munīrah's 'political body' directly by tormenting it; mould it into a docile body for her own benefit; fabricate her subjectivity as silent, obedient and subjected to her.[613]

Munīrah's attitude towards her mother's violence differs from the attitude she had towards her husband's. While she did not try to protect herself in any way while her husband hit her, she nevertheless complained to her brother. When her mother hits her she tries to escape, but she does not complain to her brother or try to contest such treatment. It looks as if Munīrah perceives the abnormality of her husband's violence because she has not experienced male violence before,[614] but does not feel capable to resist it without the assistance of her brother, to whom she feels inferior because her mother has treated her as such since her childhood. The absence of complaints about her mother's violence instead indicates how it is such an integral part of the mother-daughter relationship that she perceives it as 'normal'.

In the past though, Munīrah had resisted her mother's power in a 'long river of dispute' that flowed between the two women and only calmed down when her mother aged and her brother took her in after her divorce.[615] By then the omnipresent violent discipline her mother had been exerting on Munīrah had won her resistance, reducing her to the subdued subjectivity her mother desired. Her run like 'a scared rabbit' is more a reflex of a body automatically trying to avoid the pain of her mother's blows rather than conscious resistance. Once the resistance abates, this subdued subjectivity produced by the mother's power reveals itself more and more as an instrument of power, since it is now assisting her mother's power in its dominance of Munīrah's body.[616] When she stops talking and eating and starts shouting and crying in the dead of night[617] she is taken to a psychologist who diagnoses depression and prescribes some medications, but she allows her mother, who believes that

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[613] See *Ibid.* p. 17 for Foucault's definition of political body, pp. 19-20 for his definition of discipline and its functions.
[614] She had a tender father (see note 600 above) and her brother is not mentioned for being violent.
[615] Al-Bishr. *Ḥabbat al-Hāl*, p. 36.
[616] See Introduction p. 19 for Foucauldian subjectivity as power's product and instrument.
[617] See al-Bishr. *Ḥabbat al-Hāl,* pp. 38-40.

those medications will drug and kill her, to throw her medications away. She is then dragged from one shaykh to the next to undergo rites without any objection.

Munīrah's depression however can be considered a form of resistance, because it makes of her a nonconformist that with her 'abnormal' behaviours attracts social disapproval of herself and of her mother, the latter being considered responsible for Munīrah's nonconformity, whom she has failed to raise as a conforming daughter. The social condemnation Munīrah has gained her generates in the mother animosity towards Munīrah, which appears in the scornful way in which she talks about her, in the label of 'mad' with which she individualises her daughter in front of a stranger,[618] and in her cruelty towards Munīrah.

At this stage shouting and crying are the only expressive means left to Munīrah, whom the mother has reduced to the position of silenced *other* of the neopatriarchal monological discourse that negates any dialogue.[619] In fact in the *récit* Munīrah's voice is never heard. By contrast on the narrative level Munīrah's voice is the one that guides the whole short story, since she is the autodiegetic narrator and the focal character in this *récit* with internal and fixed focalisation.[620] These narrative strategies construct Munīrah as fully conscious of her subjection, since hers is the voice that describes it as such, and resistant to it for some time. Nevertheless she has admitted defeat after many years of unrewarding resistance, becoming a Hamlet who 'sits back and monologizes'[621] about her despair, leaving her mother and brother to lead her life of misery and subjection to nowhere.

To conclude, the protagonists of these two short stories uncomfortably find themselves distinguished from other women by a society that marks them out because of divorce, and also because of perturbation in Munīrah's case, exemplifying how the need for distinction, theorised by Hafez, can turn into

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[618] *Ibid.* p. 38.
[619] Sharabi. *Op. cit.*, p. 88.
[620] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, p. 253 for autodiegetic narrator and pp. 206-7, 222 for focalisation.
[621] O'Connor. *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

individualisation.[622] Nevertheless their responses to the situation are diametrically opposite. Munīrah is paralysed by the physical and psychological violence perpetrated by her husband and mother. Deprived of any form of support, she is dragged from a Foucauldian force relation to the other,[623] in which a violence that is not only masculinist robs her of any possibility to resist or to control her life. She is more than a subject 'subdued to the other by control and dependence', as Foucault theorised,[624] she is a subject brutally crushed by violence, although fully conscious.

Paraphrasing the aforesaid Foucauldian definition, the first protagonist too could be seen initially as a subject subdued to her husband by control and dependence, although she is spared the violent force relations that trap Munīrah. She then succeeds in defiantly ending her marital power relation, courageously faces up to maternal disapproval and the consequent de Beauvoirian devaluation striking her because she does not conform to her society's idea of femininity,[625] and does not yield to Khālid's pressure. She evolves from being a completely subdued subject to being a resistant one, albeit conditioned by social customs to be self-conscious. In the story she expresses her effort to overcome the subject she is, proving to be the becoming de Beauvoir and Foucault theorised, despite the obstacles that hinder her will to transcendence, of which de Beauvoir warned.[626]

3) Salmā Maṭar Sayf

Salmā Maṭar Sayf was born in 1968 in the United Arab Emirates and obtained her Bachelor of Education in Cairo. She currently works as editor in the Emirates Writers Union's magazine *al-Shu'ūn al-Adabiyyah* and/or in the Directorate of Programmes and Books in Dubai.[627] She has published her

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[622] See Introduction p. 57 for more details.
[623] See *Ibid.* p. 18 for more details.
[624] See *Ibid.* p. 12 for more details.
[625] See *Ibid.* pp. 50-1 for more details.
[626] See *Ibid.* pp. 52-3.
[627] The first piece of information is reported in Zaydān. *Op. cit.,* p. 376; the second in ʿĀshūr, Ghazūl, Rashīd [et al.] (eds.). *Op. cit.,* vol. 4, p. 92.

short stories in three personal collections and in one authored by several writers.[628]

Two critics have noted the courage with which Sayf treats in *ᶜUshbah* (Grass) the negative effects of the coexistence in Emirati society of a traditional mentality and a new one, which strike women particularly,[629] albeit not only, as indicated through the indecisiveness of the three male protagonists of the collection. As Wāzin notices, the female protagonists do not resort to an open, noisy rebellion against their imprisoning social context, but content themselves with rebelling in an undertone.[630] In *Hājir* (Leaver) the social concerns, women's issues and female protagonists of *ᶜUshbah*, which were typical also of Sayf's colleagues,[631] are replaced by concerns about death and exclusively male protagonists, accompanied by jinns and spirits; female characters are all secondary, reduced to merely decorative elements or described only externally.[632]

The first of the two short stories from *ᶜUshbah* I will examine is "Sāᶜah.. wa Aᶜūd.." (An Hour.. and I will be back..),[633] which I have selected because it provides an excellent example of how the clash traditional-new affects women and it proves Sayf's belonging to magical Gulf realism from its first two lines:

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[628] See bibliography for details.

[629] ᶜIzzat ᶜUmar (10/02/2005): "Ẓāhirat al-ᶜUnf wa Madlūlātuha: Ṣūrat al-Rajul fī al-Kitābah al-Qaṣaṣiyyah al-Nisā'iyyah al-Imārātiyyah". WWW document, URL: http://www.izzatomar.com/modules/news/print.php?storyid=64, retrieved on 01/07/2008; Rīm ᶜĪsāwī: "Al-Taghayyurāt al-Ijtimāᶜiyyah wa Atharuhā fī Qiṣṣah al-Mar'ah al-Imārātiyyah". WWW document, URL: http://www.mafhoum.com/press/52S4.htm, retrieved on 10/03/2008. This collection has received attention also in: Alam al-Imārāt (14/06/2007): "Al-Shakhsiyyah". WWW document, URL: http://www.alamuae.com/uae/showtopics-887.html, retrieved on 10/03/2008, which comments on stories I have not selected; Aḥmad Ḥusayn Ḥumaydān (25/11/2006): "Al-Qiṣṣah al-Imārātiyyah al-Qaṣīrah bayna al-Ta'sīs wa al-Tashkhīs: Muqārabah Ūlā". WWW document, URL: http://www.awu-dam.org/esbou1000/1032/isb1032-008.htm, retrieved on 10/03/2008, which contains very brief stylistic comments on *ᶜUshbah* and *Hājir*.

[630] Wāzin, ᶜAbduhu. 'Al-Mar'ah al-Ma'khūdhah bi-Asrārihā', *Al-Nāqid*, 2:21, (March 1990), p. 68.

[631] For the Emirati literary context see above pp. 92-6.

[632] Aḥmad Ḥusayn Ḥumaydān. *Unthā al-Kalām: Dirāsāt fī al-Qiṣṣah al-Niswiyyah al-Imārātiyyah al-Qaṣīrah.* (Al-Shāriqah: Dā'irāt al-Thaqāfah wa al-Iᶜlām, 2004), p.115.

[633] This short story has been commented upon in Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā. 'Qirā'ah Naqdiyyah fī Nakhbah min al-Qiṣaṣ al-Qaṣīrah, *Al-Bayān*, 278, (May 1989), p. 227, where there are only few remarks about this story's generic artistic features. Ghulūm produces an in-depth analysis of this short story that concentrates on the protagonist as mythological figure, on 'mythological time' and 'real time' coexisting in the story and on the narrator's role in Ibrāhīm ᶜAbd Allah Ghulūm. 'Al-Tawẓīf al-Usṭūrī fī Tajrubah al-Qiṣṣah al-Qaṣīrah fī-l-Imārāt al-ᶜArabiyyah al-Muttaḥidah', *Fuṣūl*, 11:2, (Summer 1992), pp. 278, 280-2. ᶜĪsāwī briefly comments on the traditional opening and on the social aspects of this story in ᶜĪsāwī. *Op. cit.*

يحكى في بلدتنا أن رجلاً حبس ابنته فلم تخرج إلاّ مرة واحدة ، قالت : ساعة . . وأعود .[634]

'Yuḥkā anna' and the image of the imprisoned maid introduce readers into the magic world of fairy and folk tales,[635] a fundamental component of the trend,[636] and envelop in a fabulous atmosphere the whole story, and particularly the protagonist Gharībah. Being relegated to the distant metadiegetic narrative level, she is constructed as an unfathomable and impalpable mythical figure rather than a realistic woman. Sayf employs variable internal focalisation in the presentation of Gharībah while completely ignoring Gharībah's point of view, which implies that her words and opinions are barely heard and always mediated twice: firstly by the extradiegetic heterodiegetic narrator and secondly by the intradiegetic characters/ homodiegetic narrators, who all use reported speech in the direct quoted form.[637] Those layers of reported speech and the focalisation chosen make of Gharībah not only a mythical figure but also a character that remains alien, as her name says, to readers. In the narrative too her complete segregation from the outside world and from other human beings has made of her an 'alien to people', as her father defines her, and a stranger in her own town, as the man going to the mosque and the woman visiting her neighbour consider her.[638] Her seclusion has even deeper implications:

«عندما أراها تكبر أشاهدها تشبه النخلة ، تأخذ نفس ملامحها ، تصمت مع مرور الأيام . . وعندما أجبرتها على التحدث سمعت كلماتها متقطعة وغير مفهومة ، فقدت لغتها . . » .

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[634] 'In our town it is recounted that a man imprisoned his daughter; she went out only once, saying: An hour.. and I will be back.' Salmā Maṭar Sayf. *ʿUshbah: Qiṣaṣ Qaṣīrah.* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kalimah li-l-Nashr, 1988), p. 35.

[635] This aspect and a reference to the protagonist's position representing the position of Emirati women in a developing society has been noticed in Ẓabiyyah Khamīs, (29/01/2008): "Malmaḥ al-Jīl al-Thamānīnī". WWW document, URL: http://dhabiya.maktoobblog.com/793078/%D9%85%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%8A%D9%84_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A, retrieved on 01/07/2008.

[636] See p. 94 above for details.

[637] See Genette. *Op. cit.,* pp. 238-9 for extradiegetic, intradiegetic and metadiegetic narrative levels and characters; pp. 206-7 for focalisation; p. 252 for heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrators.

[638] These three episodes are in Sayf. *Op. cit.,* pp. 36, 37-8.

[..] وكانت عندما ترى الطيور في
السماء أسمع لها صوتاً يشبه صوت الطيور الطائرة . . 639

The complete isolation from the world and the lack of communication with her father (the only human being with whom she lives) have made redundant the use of a human language, which has been replaced by the language of birds, the only beings with which she communicates. Gharībah does not talk to her father of her own initiative, except when she complains of her imprisonment and when she informs him that she is going out.[640] When she is obliged to speak he cannot understand her,[641] so deep is the estrangement between them, which adds to the segregation that weights heavily on her and that makes her feel a prisoner. Although hurt by her complaint, the father does not ease her segregation, convinced as he is that his daughter is happy with her palm, confirming his inability or unwillingness to understand her.

Nevertheless, despite all her father's efforts to maintain her segregation, by eavesdropping through the walls and by looking from a window for hours Gharībah has realised that there is a different world outside the walls of her father's house that is inhabited only by a palm and animated only by birds' songs. Those are the remains and symbols[642] of a past that has survived within the perimeter of that house and to which Gharībah has been relegated by her father, while the world outside has changed dramatically and negatively. The streets are described as unsafe, merciless, stormed by fast cars, populated by passers-by who could savage Gharībah.[643] Hence, apart from all the other kinds of alienation mentioned above, as a creature living in the past, she is alien also to the present, becoming the quintessential outcast, who wanders not only about the fringes of society, but also of her family, time

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639 '«When I see her growing up, I watch her becoming similar to the palm tree, taking its same features, she keeps silent as days pass by.. When I obliged her to talk I have heard incoherent and incomprehensible words, she lost her language..».
[..] when she sees birds in the sky I hear her doing a voice similar to that of the flying birds..' *Ibid.* pp. 39, 40.

640 The father twice remembers her defining herself 'imprisoned' in *Ibid.* pp. 35, 44 and nearly every time he speaks he recalls the moment when she left the house.

641 Also the man going to the mosque says that her language is incoherent and the woman going to hospital cannot understand her in *Ibid.* pp. 37, 41, other proofs of her estrangement from people.

642 For the symbols used by Emirati writers see p. 94 above.

643 See Sayf. *Op. cit.*, pp. 37-39.

and humanity.[644] The day she decides to break her isolation she stands in front of her father/warder dressed up and ready to leave:

لم تكن تنظر في وجهي ،
قالت : إنني ذاهبة إلى الشارع ، ساعة وأعود. ولم تنتظر مني
الايجاب أو النفي وخرجت من فوهة الباب . . . » . [645]

Although she cannot look her father in the face, she demonstrates to still possess an autonomous will by decisively informing him of her intention with intelligible words, without seeking his permission, or waiting for any reaction from his side. Once outside she adopts a behaviour that is much different the one she had when she was secluded. Away from her prison she feels unsupervised and she behaves as she pleases and not as her overseer expects of her; hence she has not interiorised her overseer's gaze and has not become 'the principle of [her] own subjection'.[646]

When her father goes out to find her, he sees her in the streets talking to people with an audible voice; she does not look anymore 'alien to people', or a girl who has 'lost her language', nor does she seem to miss her father, from whom she recoils when he gets closer, foreseeing his intentions. In fact when he thinks he has grabbed his daughter's hand the first thing he tells her is 'let us go back home', i.e. he immediately wants to restore her segregation, but Gharībah magically vanishes like 'a white cloud in the warm sky'.[647] Now that she is no longer under his supervision, her father has lost all control over her and the unknown images of her passers-by convey through their stories. The first story is that of a man who sees her while going to the mosque:

شاهدت فتاة شابة ترتجف كطير مبلول ، كان صدرها الصغير
يعلو ويهبط ، تنظر إلى وجه الشارع .. وتحدث نفسها [..]
قلت لها : «أدخلي إلى بيتك ، الشارع غير مأمون . . » نعم
خفت عليها أن ينهشها المارة . . نظرت إليّ ثم استدارت إلى
الشارع ، قالت بلغة مفككة وكأنها تدخل في نفسها ولا تخرج :
«الشارع يمضي ولا ينظر إليّ . . » . [..]

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[644] Here I am paraphrasing O'Connor's definition. See p. 56 above for full quote.
[645] 'Without looking me in the face she said: I am going into the streets, an hour and I will be back. She did not wait for my consent or refusal and went out from the door opening...».' Sayf. *Op. cit.*, p. 35.
[646] [her] replaces 'his' in my adaptation of Foucault's sentence; see Introduction p. 21.
[647] Sayf. *Op. cit.*, p. 36.

وتناولت حجراً قذفته إلى عمق الشارع .. ولا أذكر سوى [648]

Gharībah is depicted as shivering, breathing heavily, unhappy about the newly found freedom, in which she is once again so lonely that she talks to herself, disregarded by passers-by, except by this man going to the mosque. This complete stranger feels entitled to order her to go back home because the vertical, unequal relations existing between male older members and female younger members of neopatriarchal societies[649] give him a privileged position from which he exercises power over a young female member and tries 'to determine [her] conduct'[650] by using a 'strategy of terror' that depicts the street as unsafe and passers-by as aggressive beasts. Gharībah is nevertheless insensitive to his strategy. She disobeys his order and contradicts him by defining the street indifferent to her rather than unsafe. It is probably such indifference, which might be related to her negligible position as a young woman within a neopatriarchal society, that she is contesting by throwing a stone into the street. Her defying behaviour is not tolerated though. The passers-by curse her and she is shortly afterwards taken away by a policeman,[651] a representative of the disciplinary power that punishes 'all that is inadequate to the rule'.[652]

In the passers-by's other stories instead Gharībah successfully resists their attempts to guide her and to segregate her from the world and other human beings. A woman going to visit her neighbour takes her by the shoulder to prevent her from joining the fishermen, telling her that the street is merciless, but Gharībah ignores her and joins the fishermen. A poor woman covers Gharībah's head and chest, orders her to go back home because 'it is a disgrace for girls to stand in the street', and grabs Gharībah's hand to take

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[648] 'I saw a young girl that shivered like a soaked bird, while her little chest was going up and down, looked at the road surface.. and talked to herself [..] I told her: «Get into your house, the street is not safe..» Yes, I was afraid that passers-by could savage her.. She looked at me, then turned towards the street and said in an incoherent language, as if it entered herself rather than exiting:
«The street goes on about its business without looking at me..».[..]
She took a stone and threw it into the depth of the street..' *Ibid.* p. 37.
[649] Sharabi. *Op. cit.,* p. 8.
[650] See Introduction pp. 17-8 for the Foucauldian features of power. [her] replaces 'others' in the quote.
[651] Sayf. *Op. cit.,* pp. 37-8.
[652] See Introduction pp. 21 for the original Foucauldian quote

her away, but Gharībah frees her hand and remains in the street with a poor female street vendor. When she tries to help the fisherman with his nets he locks her in his boat's hold. The government employees lock her in their offices when she sits among them.[653] They all try to return Gharībah to segregation, because they see it more suited to a woman than free circulation, but they fail, because Gharībah quietly disappears from the places in which she is locked, another element that contributes to create a magic aura around her character. She seems unrestrainable in her pursuit of human contact and her discovery of the world, although she is quickly disillusioned:

وعندما كنت أنظر من النافذة لم يكن الشارع مشابهاً للشارع الآن.[654]

As al-Shārūnī notes, from her prison the streets seemed to her a place of liberation, but once she is in the streets she is surrounded by dangers and eyes.[655] The gaze of her father/overseer has been replaced by the gazes of all the members of a *Panoptical* society that expressly makes women feel potentially and actually constantly spied on in order to induce them to behave as per social norms. Nevertheless Gharībah has disobeyed those norms and the last part of the story, with the four witnesses[656] who have seen disfigured and dismembered corpses of young women and downed girls, suggests that she has probably met her death as a consequence of an extreme form of de Beauvoirian social devaluation.[657] Having defied social customs, Gharībah has become so devalued in the eyes of society that her socially worthless life has been ended. Al-Shārūnī observes that this story conveys the idea that social transformation has given Emirati women only apparent freedom, but if they try to practice that freedom as they wish their fate is death; hence for them there

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[653] Episodes reported respectively in Sayf. *Op. cit.,* pp. 38, 41, 38, 43.
[654] '«When I used to watch from the window the street did not look like it does now».' *Ibid.* p. 41.
[655] Yūsuf al-Shārūnī. *Min Jirāb al-Ḥawī: Dirāsāt wa Qirā'āt fī al-Qiṣṣah al-Qaṣīrah.* (Al-Qāhirah: Markaz al-Ḥaḍārah al-ᶜArabiyyah, 2004), p. 55.
[656] Wāzin believes that the four contradicting witnesses are a tool used to simultaneously deny and guarantee the veridicity of events, as part of the fusion of reality and imagination that characterises this story and that makes even the existence of Gharībah doubtful. See Wāzin. *Op. cit.,* p. 69. The four accounts are in Sayf. *Op. cit.,* pp. 43-4.
[657] See Introduction pp. 50-1.

are only two choices: either to be prisoners of traditions or to die.[658] Although al-Shārūnī's wording seems to suggest that death as an alternative to social imprisonment is a sort of liberation, Gharībah's death appears as the final obligation society imposes on her, since she has apparently been murdered and not chosen to die,[659] prevented from exerting her will of free subject in her situations until the very end.

The second story under scrutiny, "Ghiyāb" (Absence)[660] has been selected because it highlights the role of the mother as agent of power and because it has a structure that reminds of Krzysztof Kieślowski's film *Blind Chance* (1981). This short story recounts two alternative paths in the life of a woman: the first path, to which the one-page initial subsection 'Madkhal' (Introduction) is dedicated, presents her as a fearless pupil on a trip to the seaside, who disregards the sea's dangers and high waves and jumps into the sea to play and disappears, allegedly drowned. The second path, which occupies the remaining eleven pages of this story, follows her from childhood to adulthood. Two elements prove that these are two paths in the same woman's life: the first subsection provides sufficient details on the little girl's behaviour and temperament to recognise in her the same character described in the second path; the schoolgirls appear in the subsection's coda and in the second part's coda, connecting the two parts and giving the story a circular structure.

The two parts utilise different narrative strategies though. In the subsection the *récit* is heterodiegetic and the focalisation is zero, with the little girl being the undiscussed protagonist. In the second part instead the *récit* is homodiegetic and focalisation is internal and fixed, being the mother the narrator, a character and the only point of view from which the *récit* is narrated,[661] making quite intricate discerning who the protagonist is. These strategies give the mother such a prominent role that she nearly overshadows

[658] Al-Shārūnī. *Op. cit.*, pp. 53-5.
[659] Among the four witnesses only a child refers to a smiling corpse floating on the water (see Sayf. *Op. cit.*, p. 43), which could mean that Gharībah has wilfully pursued death by drowning.
[660] Ghulūm has commented on sea and death as mythological terms and on the search for happiness in this story; see Ghulūm. *Op. cit.*, p. 283.
[661] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, p. 252 for narrator's roles and pp. 206-7, 222 for focalisation.

her daughter, whose life story the mother mostly recounts and whose voice we hear occasionally through reported speech in direct quoted form. This 'competition for primacy' in the narrative process reflects the deep conflictuality existing between the two women that unfolds from the first line of the second part[662] and permeates the whole short story:

صغيرة لم تكن تقبل أيّ حضن، تنفلت
مني مثل عاصفة صغيرة . تهرب في كل مكان وفي كل وقت
وإذا جاء موعد نومها أطبقت عليها برجلي وأرقدتها لكنها لا
تهدأ ، تعصف مع أحلامها وتقوم سائرة وراءها [..]
أفقدتني عقلي أثناءها ، يا لها من شيطانة
صغيرة مشتعلة بنيرانها التي لا توصف .
تبحثين عن السعادة، لم يا حبة فؤادي؟. ألم أحاول
اسعادك، قرصت الظروف من أذنيها لأقدم لك السعادة على
طبق - هو قلبي . لكنك تنزعين إلى الهروب [663]

The daughter is a boisterous child unable to stand still even while sleeping, who likes to engage in energy-intensive and rowdy outdoor activities, such as fighting with other children and tearing their dolls to pieces, which drive other children away from her.[664] The mother disapproves of her daughter's behaviour, as her definition 'little devil' indicates, and cannot cope with it, as indicated by 'she made me lose my mind'. She cannot understand why her daughter constantly moves and tries to use physical constraints (her legs) to restrict her movements and be able to lull her to sleep, but this does not succeed in calming her daughter down.[665] She cannot understand why her daughter seeks happiness, since she is convinced to offer her daughter all the happiness she might want through her love. The daughter's response to her mother's attempts to keep her calm, at her side and happy is complete

[662] Which is opened by the mother's sentence: "I cannot but surrender to her wishes". Sayf. *Op. cit.*, p. 118.
[663] 'When she was little she did not accept any hug, she escaped me like a little storm. She ran away everywhere and every time and when it was bed time I used to surround her with my legs and lull her to sleep, but she did not calm down, she used to become excited because of her dreams and stand up to follow them [..] In the meantime she made me lose my mind, that little devil burning with an indescribable fire.
You seek happiness; why oh my heart's little piece?. Did I not try to make you happy? I have done the impossible to offer you happiness on a plate – that is my heart. But you yearn for escape'. *Ibid.* p. 119.
[664] *Ibid.* p. 120.
[665] She also tries other calming techniques, unsuccessfully; see *Ibid.* pp. 119-20.

rejection. She storms off if her mother's tries to hug her and prefers to escape her mother rather than staying with her. She intends to travel by sea towards an unknown destination to seek happiness,[666] which means that she is not content with her mother's offer and its implications.

وعندما كبرت قليلاً لم أزل أحاول أن أطوعك مع
الضرورات. كنت أرقبك وأنت تذرعين المكان ذهاباً وإياباً، [667]

Behind the mother's words of love and happiness there is a will to subject her daughter that she continues to have when her daughter grows up a little, indirectly admitting that she has had that will since her daughter's early childhood. This could explain the little girl's rejection as an instinctive form of resistance to the neopatriarchal[668] power that her mother is exerting on her, that relies on her in order to be effective and that uses her resistance for its own benefit.[669] In fact the mother by negatively labelling her daughter 'little devil' and 'wild she-tiger'[670] gives her resistance the negative connotations of evil and wildness, from which she derives the authority and justification to exert further power and constrictions, which entail observation ('I used to observe you') and confinement within an enclosed place (where the girl walks up and down), which is probably the house. Such confinement could be seen as a normalising sanction in this situation, because it is applied to a child who used to run wild outdoors in her early childhood, something the mother considered inappropriate for a girl or 'inadequate to the rule', as Foucault would say, and hence requiring a disciplinary sanction aiming at normalising.[671]

During her daughter's later childhood the mother employs observation and confinement to 'try to guide, to determine [her] conduct'.[672] Nevertheless she fails because her daughter is oblivious to her gaze, which she does not interiorise, and undeterred by the confinement, which only restricts the space

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[666] *Ibid.* p. 118.
[667] 'When you grew up a little I continued to try to tame you and get you to observe necessities. I used to observe you while you walked up and down the place'. *Ibid.* p. 120.
[668] Sharabi. *Op. cit.*, p. 8.
[669] See Introduction pp. 17-8 for the Foucauldian features of power.
[670] Sayf. *Op. cit.*, p. 119-20.
[671] See Introduction pp. 19-21 for full details of discipline instruments and techniques.
[672] I am paraphrasing Foucault's definition of power relations; see *Ibid.* p. 18. [her] replaces «others'».

in which she runs wild, without preventing her from doing so. Rather than becoming 'the principle of [her] own subjection'[673] by allowing the constraints of power to play upon herself, the daughter resists by becoming a fidgety, anxious and violent schoolgirl who often walks up and down instead of sleeping, screams in her sleep, hits her books, throws stones at the sea and cannot concentrate on any activity for long.[674] The mother does not relent though, she just changes techniques as her daughter grows up:

حاولت أن أستهويك كفتاة وأضرب على وتر
المرأة فيك، أغريتك بالملابس المنسقة والأحذية الأنيقة
والشرائط الحريرية ومساحيق الوجه والعين، كنت تطاوعين
وتربضين أمامي وجسدك يرتجف من أقصى أعماقه، وكنت
أدرك أنك ستهبّين في وجهي في كل ان كنارٍ عاتية مدمرة
ستأكل نفسها وما حولها....
أتمالك نفسي وأنهي تنسيقك... فإذا أنجزت مهمتي أراك
مكبلة مخنوقة من طيب مشاعرها، لاهثة الروح كأنك على
وشك هاوية لا قرار فيها... [675]

From crude confinement the mother moves towards a more refined normalising sanction by enticing her daughter's feminine vanity, but her daughter does not seem to cooperate much, so that the mother takes the lead and 'puts her in order', i.e. she adjusts her to her idea of femininity by titivating her with clothes, make up, shoes. She is undeterred by her daughter's body language that exposes the discomfort lying behind her obedience. As a 'wild she-tiger' she is crouching, shaking, ready to pounce on her mother, but she is no longer as violent as she was when younger, or at least so it seems. The mother is fully aware of the risk of being attacked she is running and of the harm she is causing her daughter, as she can see her breathless and strangled. Nevertheless she sees this as a mission to accomplish. It is her duty

[673] *Ibid.* p. 21. [her] replaces 'his'.
[674] Sayf. *Op. cit.,* pp. 120-1.
[675] 'I have tried to attract you as a girl and to touch the chord of the woman within you, I have enticed you into coordinated clothes, elegant shoes, silk ribbons, face and eyes make-up; you used to obey and crouch in front of me with your body shaking to the core. I was aware that you would pounce on me at any moment like a violent, destructive fire that eats itself and what surrounds it....
I have controlled myself and finished tidying you up ... When I completed my mission I saw you chained and strangled by its good feelings, breathless as if you were on the brink of a bottomless hell...' *Ibid.* p. 121.

as mother to make a 'socially valued woman' out of her 'wild she-tiger', even if this entails cruelty towards her daughter, hence becoming the channel through which neopatriarchal power passes to reach and oppress her daughter.[676] It is only when her daughter returns to her usual violent resistance in a public occasion by throwing around her shoes, ribbons and clothes that the mother relents:

أخذتك في عباءتي وأنا أتصبب عرقاً من
الحياء الأحمر الذي واجهته، حلفت بيني وبين نفسي أن لا
أخرجك وأتركك في زينتك التي تبغين..[677]

She does not suspend her normalisation plans for her daughter because she acknowledges that she is tyrannizing and tormenting her daughter and regrets it. She does so because she is publicly shamed by a daughter who, through her nonconformity to 'the idea of femininity... artificially defined by customs and fashions',[678] socially devalues herself and her mother, who is proven incapable to instil traditional femininity norms into her daughter. The mother responds to such affront swearing not to let her daughter out, going back to the tactic of confinement as normalising sanction and preventative measure to avoid being shamed any further. Once she confines her daughter she grants her the 'generous concession' to dress as she pleases, since in confinement she cannot possibly damage her mother's reputation again.

After this failure the mother becomes more ambitious and aims at normalising her daughter's whole lifestyle by convincing her to select a suitor and marry. Through the preparations and the wedding the mother is overjoyed at her daughter's compliance with her wishes and with social norms. Her daughter allows her to prepare her outfit, follows her advices, behaves suitably during the party, hence safeguarding her mother's reputation, who, for the sake of the smooth running of the wedding, decides to ignore her daughter's perturbation. After the wedding the daughter becomes enwrapped in a deep, calm, silent sadness that obliterates her customary fidgetiness:

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[676] See Introduction p. 17 for Foucault's description of how power is exercised.
[677] 'I took you in my cloak while I was dripping with sweat for the shame that I was facing, I swore to myself not to let you out and to leave you in the outfit you wished..' Sayf. *Op. cit.,* p. 122.
[678] I am here using de Beauvoir's words; see Introduction p. 50.

«لم أنا هكذا..؟»
ثم استدركت استدراكاً متعجلاً متكلفاً.. سأعود إلى
السعادة التي ابتغيتها لي. نعم سأؤلف لك سيمفونية من
الأطفال. سأتزين كما تشائين....[679]

The daughter cannot comprehend why she has become sad and calm, but she believes she can remedy to her situation by accomplishing her mother's plans. The years of discipline the mother has exerted on her, and the misery and isolation marriage has added, are now starting to produce their fruits: she now thinks in terms of the happiness, the children, the aspect her mother wants for her, striving for the first time to please her mother. Her remarks are hasty and affected because she pretends to be content with her mother's normalised happiness and tries to convince herself and her mother that she will be able to accomplish the maternal plans. In fact she starts making up, arranging her hair, asking her mother's advice on coordinating clothes and shoes and her mother is ecstatic:

فقد صدقت
تغيرك، أخذتك من يدك وقلت: هيا إلى بيتك الطبيعي.
طاوعتني باسترخاء لم ألمسه منك طيلة حياتي، انهلت عليك
أقبل طاعتك وكدت أفقد صوابي:
فلم أكن ممسكة إلاّ بالمرآة المزينة. [..]
نظرت إليّ بغياب طويل يعصف به ألم مشتت.
وبكل هدوء تناولت المرآة وحطمتها شظايا معفرة
بالمكياج في وجهي الحائر. تركتها بشأنها[680]

Her daughter's behaviour makes her believe that she has finally turned into the obedient daughter she has been striving to fabricate with her discipline,[681] while deceiving herself into thinking that she seeks her

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[679] '«Why am I like this..?»
Then she retracted hastily and affectedly.. I will return to the happiness that you wished for me. Yes I will author for you a symphony of children. I will dress up as you want....' Sayf. *Op. cit.*, p. 124.

[680] 'I believed that you had changed, I took you by the hand and said: Go to your natural home. You obeyed me with a relaxation I had never perceived from your side in all my life, I pounced on you to kiss your obedience while nearly losing my wits:
I was holding only the decorated mirror.[..]
She looked at me with a long absent-mindedness shaken by dispersed pain.
With complete calm she took the mirror and smashed it into splinters soiled with make-up in my dazed face. I left her to it'. *Ibid.* p. 125.

[681] For Foucault 'discipline «fabricates» individuals'; see Introduction p. 20.

daughter's happiness. It is in fact obedience she seeks, kisses and at which she rejoices once she perceives it, soon forgetting her daughter's sadness, but it is a short-lived joy. The resistance that always accompanies power within the Foucauldian paradigm[682] becomes visible in the daughter escaping the mother's kiss and smashing the mirror. The image of the mirror splinters soiled with make-up could hint either at the implosion of the daughter's pretence and self-delusion or at the mental/psychological disintegration that is announced by her distress and absent-mindedness, first symptoms of her precarious mental health that will be fully revealed later. The mother, unconcerned by the implications of her behaviour, goes away and leaves her daughter to 'regain her wits'[683] on her own, in the hope that she will stop worrying her mother with her eccentricity, confirming that she refuses her daughter, after regretting her birth several times,[684] because she is not normalised. However she tirelessly dreams and works on her normalisation:

بنيت أحلامي حول تغيرها يوماً بعد يوم وأنا أتابع رقة
طبعها وانحسار قلقها الذي حل محله صفاء لا يقارب [..]
عدت أحادثها حول ما يجب أن يكون وما لا يجب، ولم
أكن ألمس امتعاضاً منها كانت تستمع إليّ كنفس صافية
[..] تقابلني بنظرة ممتنة دون
أن تتفوه بأي كلمة ثم تنسرب كعصفور إلى مكانها. [685]

The mother observes the evolution of her daughter into the meek, calm and pure being she always dreamt her to be, and takes this opportunity to restart the 'formative work' on her daughter's subjectivity, finding fertile ground for her norms in her newly gained meekness and calm. In fact her daughter does not show irritation at her words and receives her with a grateful look, from which the mother, who was used to her violent outbursts, derives that she is listening to her. The mother is so blinded by the concretisation of her 'dream daughter' that she does not deduce anything from the behaviour of her

[682] See *Ibid.* p. 17.
[683] Sayf. *Op. cit.*, p. 125.
[684] The mother wishes twice that her daughter had not been born and calls the day of her birth ill-fated; see *Ibid.* pp. 118-20.
[685] 'I built my dreams around her change day after day while I followed how her nature became meek and her anxiety vanished, replaced by an incomparable purity [..]
I restarted talking to her about what must be and what must not, and I did not perceive irritation in her, she was listening to me like a pure soul [..] She used to receive me with a grateful look without pronouncing a word and then hide in her place like a bird.' *Ibid.* p. 126.

daughter who for months does not say a word when her mother visits her and hides in her place. When such behaviour finally worries the mother, she decides to check her daughter's room, in which she spends most of her days devoting herself to sculpture. Her daughter comments on one of her sculptures:

هذا التمثال يأبى إلاّ الإنحناء المعذب. . .
حاولت أن أنسقه ولم أستطع. . أنه فعلاً معذب، صنعت
المستحيل ليعتدل لكن كل شيء يأبى سعادته [686]

From the monologue to which this fragment belongs transpires the mental instability[687] of the daughter, who is reproducing in her relation to her sculpture the same attitude her mother adopts with her. She tries to tidy up the statue like her mother did with her earlier.[688] She tries to put the statue upright, because she knows that the upright status will give it happiness, albeit the statue prefers to bend, despite its painfulness, just like her mother has been trying all her life to direct her daughter's life towards a standardised happiness, while the daughter prefers her own non-conformed, painful and convoluted happiness. The mother's reaction to this monologue is rejection once again:

تركتها لتماثيلها وخيالاتها وانشغالاتها.
إنها لا تريحني أبداً. لا تبغي سعادتي. يا لها من شقية. [689]

Just like previously she had left her distraught daughter because she had not behaved 'normally', now she abandons her without worrying about her evidently perturbed mental state,[690] because she has realised that her daughter has not changed according to her designs, and she takes on the role

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[686] '[..] this statue refuses but to painfully bend at all costs...I have tried to tidy it up and I could not.. It is really painful, I have done the impossible in order for it to stand upright but each thing refuses its happiness'. *Ibid.* p. 127.

[687] In the monologue the daughter talks about objects she has sculpted that have become animated and chosen lives different from those to which she had destined them (*Ibid.* pp. 127-8), in which transpires also Sayf's ability in fusing together fantasy and reality.

[688] She uses the same verb *nassaqa* that her mother had used; see p. 201 above.

[689] 'I left her to her sculptures, fantasies and occupations.
She never gives me any relief. She does not wish my happiness. Oh how miserable she is.' Sayf. *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

[690] The use of the word 'fantasies' indicates that the mother is aware that her daughter is talking of unrealistic things, but it is not clear whether she attributes those fantasies to her usual eccentricity or to an altered mental state.

of victim of a daughter who disregards her happiness and overburdens her.[691] For the first time in this quote the mother admits that her drive is her own need for happiness, which she obliges her daughter to satisfy, and not her daughter's happiness. In front of another frustration of her need she walks off. When her daughter's mental state worsens to the extent that she invokes death the mother can only think of killing her as a way to help her find happiness,[692] while earlier she had feared her daughter's suicide.[693] She has probably realised that her daughter's mental imbalance, which is another form of resistance, hinders rather than satisfies her own need for happiness and destroys her hopes to see her daughter 'conformably happy' in life. Hence she sees in death the only remaining way to overcome her disturbed, unhappy non-conformity.

Therefore al-Shārūnī's observation regarding freedom[694] is pertinent also to this short story. The daughter tries to practice freedom, hence her fate is death.[695] Her death though is not an anonymous social imposition like Gharībah's death: it evolves from a tragic accidental consequence of childish irresponsibility in the first part into a woman's wilful act (suicide or murder) in the second part.

To conclude both Gharībah and the daughter meet their death because they have contravened the norms their father, mother and society have tried to impose on them, standing as resisting subjects whose will to resist persists throughout both stories notwithstanding the absence of any form of support in their complete solitude. In fact none of the two women is integrated in a community. Gharībah has contacts only with her father, who made her into an outcast and with whom she does not talk, and when she goes out she is marked out by people and rejected because of her behaviour. The daughter is

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[691] She takes the same role in Sayf. *Op. cit.*, p. 118 when she asks her daughter 'Have you not any mercy on your poor mother?', and on p. 119 when she says about her daughter 'she overburdened me with worries as an adult and as a child'.
[692] *Ibid.* p. 129.
[693] *Ibid.* pp. 121, 128.
[694] See p. 199 above.
[695] The unclear end allows conjectures about the daughter's fate. If the wave represents the daughter, which is my interpretation, then she dies, but whether it is suicide or murder remains unclear for me. For Wāzin instead is surely suicide; see Wāzin. *Op. cit.*, pp. 68-9.

refused by her mother, the only person to whom she tries to be close, avoided by other children as a child, uneasy with other people as an adult,[696] thus permanently rejected and distinguished from others because of her behaviour. In both cases distinction is not a need, as theorised by Hafez,[697] but an imposition in Gharībah's case and an innate way of being, possibly linked to psychological distress, in the daughter's case. Only death ends their distinction and resistance, hence I disagree with Wāzin, who considers Sayf's characters 'subdued characters who do not know the meaning of heroism'.[698] On the contrary their resistance is heroic in their circumstances because they do not ultimately surrender to their overseers.

[696] Sayf. *Op. cit.*, p. 123.
[697] See above p. 57.
[698] Wāzin. *Op. cit.*, p.70.

CHAPTER FOUR

IN PURSUIT OF CHOSEN SUBJECTIVITIES IN THE MAGHREB

This fourth chapter, which follows the same structure of the previous two chapters, presents the achievements of three Maghrebian short story writers: Moroccan Rabīᶜah Rīḥān and Tunisian Rashīdah al-Turkī and Ḥayāh al-Rāyyis. Although I have previously considered only one writer per country, this has not been possible for Tunisia due to the paucity of the available material and to its thematic content, which is mostly not relevant to this thesis. The only relevant short stories I could find in several collections[699] are the ones examined below, which happen to belong to two different writers, and I have chosen to include them both, despite the different authors, because none of the two taken singularly would have been sufficiently representative of Tunisian women authors' achievements. Since in this context I utilise both texts as examples of Tunisian literature rather than of a specific author's art, they will be grouped together under a main 'Tunisian short stories' heading, analysed individually under two separate subheadings with the authors' names, and compared in a final section summarising the similarities and differences among the characters of both stories.

[699] I have surveyed the following collections: Rashīdah al-Turkī. *ᶜAṣr al-Hanīn: Majmūᶜah Qaṣaṣiyyah.* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ādāb, 1990); Nāfilah Dhahab. *Al-Ṣamt: Qiṣaṣ.* (Tūnus: Tibr al-Zamān, 1993); Ḥayāh Al-Rāyyis. *Layta Hindan...: Qiṣaṣ.* (Ṣafāqis: Ṣāmid li-l-Nashr wa al-Tawzīᶜ, 1991); ᶜArūsiyyah al-Nālūtī. *Al-Buᶜd al-Khāmis.* (Lībya-Tūnus: Al-Dār al-ᶜArabiyyah li-l-Kitāb, 1975).

1) Rabīᶜah Rīḥān

Rabīᶜah Rīḥān was born in Safi (Morocco) in 1951, is a graduate of a Regional Pedagogical Centre and currently teaches Arabic in secondary schools. She is a member of the Moroccan Writers' Union, in whose central bureau she has been elected to serve in the past. She publishes her short stories in Moroccan, Tunisian, Egyptian and Lebanese periodicals, on several websites, and has issued six collections up to present, one of which has received a prize.[700]

Rīḥān's short stories have attracted a considerable amount of attention from several commentators. The critic Najīb al-ᶜAwfī and the writer ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd ᶜAqqār agree on her poetic, sublime language, with the former praising also her narrative structure and the latter commending the equilibrium between narration and dialogue she achieves and her expert openings and endings. The critic/writer Muḥammad Ṣūf finds Rīḥān's element of distinction from other women writers in her use of men and children as protagonists and narrators and in her representations of male worlds that even some male writers have been unable to equal.[701] However most of her characters are still women, who are depicted without hiding their physicality and secrets or glossing over profane behaviours or the harsh conditions in which many live, which is particularly true for *Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī* (Wings for Storytelling).[702]

The critic Suᶜād Miskīn and the writer Saᶜīd Būkarāmī both notice the rebellious attitudes Rīḥān's children protagonists have towards social norms, with Būkarāmī also pointing out that those children refuse to give up their own dreams of freedom. Miskīn also discerns Rīḥān's sharp observations of social

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[700] See bibliography for details.

[701] Saᶜīdah Sharīf (04/06/2008): "Rabīᶜah Rīḥān.. Kātibah Istithnā'iyyah Tabharu bi-Lughatihā al-Bādhikhah". WWW document, URL: http://www.alarab.com.qa/details.php?docId=15013&issueNo=163&secId=18#, retrived on 15/07/2008.

[702] On this collection see Bāsim ᶜUbūd (01/01/2007): "Al-Maghribiyyah Rabīᶜah Rīḥān.. wa Ḥammālūhā al-Mushākisūn". WWW document, http://www.al-watan.com/data/20070101/index.asp?content=culture#2, retrieved on 10/07/2007; Majallat Adabiyyāt (19/03/2006): "Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī al-Majmūᶜah al-Qaṣaṣiyyah al-Jadīdah li-l-Qāṣṣah Rabīᶜah Rīḥān". WWW document, http://adbyat.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=629, retrieved on 10/07/2007; ᶜAbd al-Ḥaqq Mīfrānī (08/12/2006): «"Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī" li-l-Qāṣṣah Rabīᶜah Rīḥān Ajniḥah li-l-Kitābah"». WWW document, http://mifrani.jeeran.com/archive/2006/12/127324.html, retrieved on 10/07/2007.

and religious phenomena and popular rites,[703] which is widespread among Moroccan writers of her generation[704] and which brings Rīḥān to represent several characters from the lower classes in their struggle to survive.

There are several short stories of Rabīᶜah Rīḥān that present two female characters engaged in confrontations with varying degrees of hostility and disagreement. Among them I have chosen two stories because they ably represent women simultaneously as resisting individuals and as individuals capable of and willing to subject other women, hence offering the possibility to explore the intersubjective dynamics between them. The first of the two stories is "Ākhir al-Ṭarīq" (The End of the Road)[705] from *Mashārif al-Tīh* (The Heights of the Labyrinth), in which the two female characters confronting each other are a young woman and her elderly grandmother, who are engaged in a generational disagreement that, although tempered by their deep reciprocal affection, points out the inequality of their relationship.

The grandmother, despite her physical frailty and her failing memory, is portrayed as a lively strong woman, who enjoyed some authority in the past and now complains because she spends most of her days alone at home. When she recounts her past during her granddaughter's visits she does not like her prima donna role to be contested:

تبدو واثقة، فأراوغها بتساؤلاتي، وإذ تدرك قصدي
تبادرني بغضب وتهكم:
- أنا لست مثلك، أكلت الحروف ذاكرتي!
أنفجر مقهقهة إذ أجدني محاصرة من جديد بعتبها اللذيذ
عن ضياع أيامي! [706]

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[703] Al-Maghribiyyah (03/06/2008): "Rabīᶜah Rīḥān Tuḥalliqu fī Ajwā' al-Ṣālūn al-Adabī". WWW document, URL: http://www.almaghribia.ma/Paper/Article.asp?idr=13&idrs=13&id=62942, retrieved on 15/07/2008.

[704] For the Moroccan context see above pp. 96-9.

[705] Ziyād ᶜAlī defines this short story a feud between today's women and yesterday's ones in his mainly stylistic review of the collection; see Ziyād ᶜAlī (22/02/2005): "Rabīᶜah Rīḥān wa (Mashārif al-Tīh) Ḥiyākat al-Nasīj min Khuyūṭ al-Ṣamt". WWW document, http://thawra.alwehda.gov.sy/_print_veiw.asp?FileName=105777176920050221102719, retrieved on 10/07/2007.

[706] 'She seems sure and I try to trick her with my questions; when she realises what my purpose is, she surprises me with her anger and sarcasm:
— I am not like you, my memory has eaten the letters!

The granddaughter/narrator knows that some of her grandmother's stories are exaggerated, imprecise and self-aggrandising, but when she tries to express her doubts about the reliability of her grandmother's memories the latter's overreaction reveals that she sees her granddaughter's doubts as an attack on her authority. The elderly woman founds her authority on her memory, age and experience and admitting that her memory is failing would mean for her to lose a pillar of the authority on which she bases her superiority in the unbalanced relationship with her granddaughter. She surprises her granddaughter with her uncalled-for anger and sarcasm, her belittling remarks about her granddaughter's memory and her rebuke, which are part of her technique to subject her granddaughter to her authority and to defend her position, making of their relation a power relation.[707] The grandmother takes as an affront to her superiority even her granddaughter's laughter, by which the latter is probably just trying to stop the dramatic escalation of this trifling disagreement, and to back up her authority under attack the grandmother takes the argument a step up:

تتفرس في بعينيها الضيقين الغائمتين وتقول:

- ماذا رأيتن وماذا عشتن؟ [..]

- أليست حياتنا أحلى؟! [..]

- كنا معززات، لا نلهث وراء الكدر مثلما تفعلن! [708]

Craftily she moves from a personal disagreement to a generational comparison, a power strategy that shifts the attention from her failing memory to the strength of the experience of her generation's women, so to defend her personal superiority and power over her granddaughter, whose generation she disparages with an animosity that transpires from her hard gaze. However the granddaughter is neither defeated nor subdued. Her question/statement about her generation's quality of life, which her grandmother avoids answering by

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I burst out laughing loudly when I find myself once again trapped by her sweetly scolding me for wasting my days!' Rabīᶜah Rīḥān. *Mashārif al-Tīh: Qiṣaṣ*. (Al-Muḥammadiyyah: Maṭbaᶜah Fuḍālah, 1996) p. 30.

[707] See Introduction p. 18 for power relations' features.

[708] 'She looks hard at me with her narrow, clouded eyes and says:
— What have you all seen and what have you all lived? [..]
[the granddaughter says] — Is not our life better?! [..]
— We were honoured, we did not run panting after worries as you all do!' Rīḥān. *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

resorting to the trite argument of honour, and her questioning of the aura of perfection that envelops her grandmother's past indicate that she rejects her grandmother's pose of superiority and takes the distance from her lifestyle without any hostility. The latter, faced by her granddaughter's composed resistance to her power, resorts to a personal attack:

تشير بأصابعها نحو رأسي ثم وجهي [..]
– أهذا شعر، أهذا وجه؟!
وكنت أفهم سؤالها المثقل بالمعنى، لم يرق لها أبدا وجهي الباهت من غير زينة، ولاقصة شعري التي تشبهها بالغلمان، وكنت إذا عاكستها قليلا تصدني وتعيرني بالجهل والهبل!...
– يا بنتي، حرام ما تفعليه بنفسك... 709

She sharply criticises her granddaughter because she does not use make-up and cuts her hair short, i.e. because she contravenes the femininity rules of their society that expects women to wear make-up and long hair and look 'feminine' rather than boyish. Such contravention of their society's artificially defined sexual values devalues her in front of society[710] and in her grandmother's eyes, who, by trying to impose make-up and long hair on her granddaughter, is unawares acting as the channel through which power can reach her granddaughter. The grandmother is determined to get her up to femininity norms. Her overpowering and silencing attitude, her refusal of any resistance, her accusation of ignorance and stupidity, the moral overtone given by the definition 'ḥarām' are clearly strategies by which she tries to determine her granddaughter's conduct,[711] reserve the master subject role for herself and relegate her granddaughter to the subjected subject position. The granddaughter though respectfully and calmly resists the attempt to guide her, albeit the grandmother's words hurt her,[712] because she is critical of the femininity norms to which her grandmother subscribes and has transcended

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[709] '..she pointed at my head and then at my face [..]:
— Are these hair, is this a face?!
I understood her question laden with meaning, she never liked my pale face without make-up or my haircut that makes me resemble a boy, and if I tried to gainsay her a little she opposed me and rebuked me for my ignorance and stupidity!...
— My child, it is ḥarām what you do to yourself... ' *Ibid.* p. 31. I have left ḥarām untranslated in order not to lose the many nuances this polysemic word conveys.
[710] This is de Beauvoir's theory about femininity norms; see Introduction pp. 50-1.
[711] This is Foucauld's definition of power relations; see *Ibid.* p. 18.
[712] See Rīḥān. *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

what her grandmother is and her way to relate to others. She is a becoming who pursues an intersubjective reciprocal relationship between equals[713] with her grandmother that could replace the existing unbalanced relationship. Nevertheless within the Arab patriarchal society in which she has been living the grandmother has been trained only to establish inequal, hierarchical relations of domination and submission, as indicated by Joseph;[714] hence she cannot understand her granddaughter's intentions and clings to her master role.

The second of the two stories is "Buqᶜah Ḥamrā'" (A Red Stain)[715] from the collection *Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī*, which explores the dynamics of power existing between a mother and her daughter and within their town community with clear subversive intentions visible in its narrative strategies. This is an autodiegetic *récit* with fixed internal focalisation,[716] in which a fourteen-year-old girl, a child who is expected to 'do as she is told', tells from her viewpoint her own story and her fellow townspeople's. In her community women seem to be the only active members, since the few men mentioned (the groom, the policeman, Maryam's brothers) are described as running away or isolated, while women are the first ones to spring into action when disaster strikes. When Maryam loses her virginity the female elders of the community prevent an 'honour killing':

فكرة الانتقام ظلت واردة. ربما فكرت الجارات في مسدس الوالد أو سكين الإخوة، لكن لحكمة مّا، استسلموا للغط العجائز ومساعيهن الحكيمة. قدر ومكتوب. وأنت تريد وأنا أريد والله يفعل ما يريد.[717]

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[713] See *Ibid.* pp. 52-3 for this definition by Foucault and de Beauvoir.

[714] Suad Joseph. 'Connectivity and Patriarchy among Urban Working-Class Arab Families in Lebanon', *Ethos*, 21:4, (December 1993), pp. 459-60.

[715] Manāl Khamīs briefly mentions this story among those having marginal and subjected characters, referring in particular to Maryam; see Manāl Khamīs (06/05/2006): «ᶜĀlam Muthaqqal bi-l-Insān Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī" li-l-Qāṣṣah al-Maghribiyyah Rabīᶜah Rīḥān». WWW document, URL: http://www.fdaat.com/art/exec/view.cgi?archive=18&num=3014, retrieved on 10/07/2007. She also adds general comments on the collection.

[716] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, p. 253 for autodiegetic *récit* and pp. 206-7 for focalisation.

[717] 'The idea of revenge was mentioned. Perhaps the female neighbours thought of her father's revolver or her brothers' knife, but for a wisdom of some sort the men yielded to the female elders' uproar and wise intrigues. It is destiny and it is written. You want and I want and

The female elders of the community make use of their authority and intrigues to induce Maryam's male relatives to abandon any idea of revenge by reminding them that what has happened might not be what human beings want but it is destiny, it is wanted by God. They are the instruments through which the power of tradition can reach and subject younger generations. Similarly, when the policeman's daughter's groom runs off because she is not a virgin, mothers gather and harshly scold their daughters, using their authority on their daughters to inculcate in them their society's sexual values and to scare them with the bleak consequences awaiting any non-conforming girl and her family. The loss of virginity for an unmarried woman implies for her sexual and social exclusion, an extreme form of the devaluation of which de Beauvoir spoke,[718] and for her family dishonour, which is what strikes Maryam and her family:

من يومها توارت مريم و لم نعد نرى وجهها. أخضعت نفسها
تماما لطيش الطلبات. صارت عبدة البيت الذاعنة !!..[719]

Deprived of any social and sexual value and respect, Maryam has now no alternative but to stay indoors to serve her father and brothers like a slave, too ashamed to show her face, while her brothers isolate themselves in order to avoid jokes and insinuations. She has become a 'subject subdued to the other by control and dependence',[720] since she must work hard in order to be allowed to remain in the house of her father, on whom she completely depends for her survival. The other girls of the community are frightened by the fate of the two poor girls and by the terror strategies of their mothers, to whom they are subdued. While subdued to their mothers, older girls take advantage of the age difference to dominate younger girls, because this is how they have been trained to interact.[721] The protagonist, already trapped in this web of terror and domination, is even more terrified when her sister

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God does what He wants.' Rabīᶜah Rīḥān. *Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī: Qiṣaṣ.* (Al-Dār al-Bayḍā': Dār al-Thaqāfah li-l-Nashr wa al-Tawzīᶜ, 2006), p. 19.

[718] See pp. 50-1 Introduction.

[719] 'Since that day Maryam disappeared, and we did not see her face anymore. She subjected herself completely to fickle requests. She became the subjected slave of the house!!..' Rīḥān. *Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī*, p. 19.

[720] One of Foucault's definitions of subject; see Introduction p. 12.

[721] Joseph explains how Arab patriarchal societies train their members to establish hierarchical relationships of domination and submission. See Suad Joseph. *Op. cit.*, pp. 459-60.

informs her that their mother has accepted to marry her to the son of a female relative who during her visit

لم ترفع عينيها عني لحظة حين
رأتني منحنية أنظر عند قدمي، وأنفذ بإتقان أوامر أمي
وتوجيهاتها السامية. من غريزتها الصائبة قالت لأمي إنني أصلح
عروسا لابنها !! ..[722]

The relative selects this little girl because she seems obedient and subdued. She obeys her mother, albeit she looks at her feet, not at the floor, a detail that the guest cannot see from her viewpoint and that is one of the girl's irreverent gestures through which the narrative's subversive intentions are expressed. The relative sees in the girl a subservient daughter-in-law on whom she will exert the authority inherited from her seniors once she becomes the girl's mother-in-law, as indicated by Kandiyoti.[723] The girl's mother and relative are hence cooperating in making of this adolescent an adult 'subject subdued to the other by control', where the other will be the husband's entire birth family, because their society has trained them only to establish relations of domination and submission.[724]

Such cooperation demonstrates that the dynamics of power already observed in the wider community are rooted in the family, the smallest social group at the base of society. Within it power relations are formed and from it they permeate all society in order to guarantee this young woman's (and many others') familial and social subjection, exactly like they have guaranteed the subjection of her mother and other mothers. Power passes through and relies[725] on these adult women, who have interiorised these power mechanisms and are hence unconsciously playing the role of 'channels of power' with younger women, just like their female ancestors have previously done with them.[726] Nevertheless while Maryam and the policeman's daughter

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[722] '..she did not take her eyes off me for a second when she saw me bent looking at my feet, and carrying out masterly my mother's orders and excellent instructions. With her unmistakable intuition she told my mother that I am a suitable bride for her son!!..' Rīḥān. *Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī*, p. 17.
[723] See Kandiyoti. 'Bargaining with Patriarchy', p. 279.
[724] See Joseph. *Op. cit.*, pp. 459-60.
[725] See p. 17 Introduction for Foucault's reflections about power.
[726] See Kandiyoti. 'Bargaining with Patriarchy', p. 279 for the explanation of how the expectation of inheriting seniors' power encourages women to interiorise classic patriarchy.

have allowed the p حين فاجئتني أمي مسرورة بالنبأ تلعثمت وبكيت. أظل وجه themselves, this fourteen-year-o مريم الصبوح. تخيلتها في عزلتها جاثية تمسح وتجلي وتتلقى عنف الكل برضى وقبول.

مريم ا قلت لأمي في رجاء :

الكل - أنا لا أريد الزواج، لاأريد، لا أريد.

قل ضحكت وقالت :

- أ - وأنا أريد.

ض خجلت إذ وجدتني أقول لها :

- و - تزوجيه أنت !! ..

خ أطرقت قليلا وعندما رفعت رأسي كانت ملامحها قد تكدرت،

- تزوجيه أنت !! ..

أطرقت قليلا وعندما رفعت رأسي كانت ملامحها قد تكدرت،

لكن سرعان ماعادت إلى طبيعتها.

- إنه طيب يا ابنتي وميسور.

انطفأ وجهي من الألم وأنا أهددها وأقول :

- إن زوجتموني أهرب.

بدا أنها ذهلت وهي تفكر. سمعتها تقول بقلق واستياء :

- تهربين ؟؟.. و لم ؟؟...

قلت بغم، وأنا أنظر إلى بقعة صغيرة حمراء على البلاط :

- أنا لا أريد أن أكون عبدة لأحد !! .. 727

The protagonist believes that marriage will oblige her to lead the same life as Maryam, which she imagines as a life of subjection, segregation and

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727 'When my mother gladly broke the news to me I stammered and cried. Maryam's pretty face appeared. I imagined her in her segregation, kneeling, cleaning, scrubbing and taking everybody's harshness with satisfaction and acceptance.
I said to my mother, begging:
— I do not want to marry, I do not want, I do not want.
She laughed and said:
— And I want.
I was ashamed when I found myself saying:
— Marry him yourself!!..
I bowed my head a little and when I lifted it up her face features were drawn, but they soon returned to normality.
— He is good, my daughter, and wealthy.
My face was lifeless for the pain while I threatened her saying:
— If you marry me off I run away.
She seemed surprised while she was thinking. I heard her saying anxiously and discontentedly:
— You run away??.. Why??...
I said distressed, while I was looking at a small red stain on the tiles:
— I do not want to be slave to anyone!!..' Rīḥān. *Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī*, p. 20.

domestic slavery, because this is how marriage is lived by her mother and the women belonging to her community, while she lives the free life of a wild animal.[728] She does not object to the prospective spouse, as her mother thinks, but to the fact of being married while still adolescent and losing her freedom to become a man's slave. This perspective is totally unimaginable for the mother, who cannot understand why her daughter could run away instead of accepting the 'honour' to marry a 'good catch'. The mother is still deeply entrenched in the traditionalist mindset of her society, in which marriage is the utmost aspiration for a female, regardless of her age. The daughter instead values her freedom above all, she refuses to give up her dreams of freedom, as Sa°īd Būkarāmī noticed,[729] and she is ready to contradict her mother steadfastly with the three repetitions of 'I do not want'. When her mother ridicules her laughing and aping her language with 'And I want' the daughter becomes more daring with the words 'Marry him yourself' that escape her. She temporarily bows her head though, ashamed of her disrespectful words, which are so unpleasant and unexpected for the mother that she stops laughing and her face becomes drawn.

Nonetheless the mother unrelenting insists on the marriage and she finds the same determination in her daughter who threatens to run away. This unexpected threat surprises her and displeases her because she perceives herself as an unquestionable model and source of authority for her daughter. They live in a patriarchal connective system that does not value autonomy and gives the mother, i.e. the senior, the priviledge to craft her daughter's self and to consider her as an extension of herself because she is her junior.[730] Therefore the mother is unprepared to the rejection of herself as model and authority and to her daughter's resolute autonomy from her. The latter is distressed, because it is emotionally costly for her to disobey a mother that is dear to her but not a model to follow, because the mother represents for her the slave she does not want to be. Her wish not to be 'slave to anyone'

[728] The protagonist describes herself as 'free bird', 'wild rabbit', 'restive gazelle' in *Ibid.* p. 17.
[729] See p. 209 above.
[730] Patriarchal connectivity is defined 'the production of selves with fluid boundaries organized for gendered and aged domination in a culture valorizing kin structures, morality, and idioms.' in Joseph. *Op. cit.,* p. 453; the mentioned features of patriarchal connectivity are on p. 461.

indicates that she seeks her own chosen subjectivity[731] and resists her mother's attempt to impose a slave subjectivity.

Although the result of such resistance remains unknown, the daughter has started to transcend and overcome what her mother is, because while her mother is totally subjected to her community's traditional social and sexual values and tries to subject her daughter to them, the daughter is critical of those values and does not accept subjection to them. She refuses that other women's past and present ways of being can determine what she will be when she becomes an adult, and such a wish of transcendence indicates that she is a burgeoning subject as defined by Foucault and de Beauvoir, i.e. a becoming who perpetually transcends herself.[732]

The last story under scrutiny is "Ḥālah" (Status) from *Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī*, which I have chosen because it expounds the relationship the protagonist Bahījah, a celibate adult woman, has with her self and what influences such relationship. The first line of the story already gives a clear indication on the nature of this relationship:

لم أحب نفسي. كنت أكن لها أكداسا من المشاعر النيلية (النيلة)، لعلمي بضعفها وانجذابي بسببها نحو كل حس نافر بالألم يتمدد بغتة أمامي على محيا رجل ..[733]

Bahījah declares that she does not love, or even hates, her self because she knows that her self is weak and that it causes her to be attracted only by men who suffer because of unreciprocated love or for the loss of their beloved.[734] The story though provides personal and socio-familial details that indicate a more plausible explanation for this lack of self-love that goes beyond this simplistic justification. Bahījah depicts herself as an unrealistic

[731] This is the effort of subjectivation typical of short stories for Hafez; see above pp. 57-8.
[732] See Introduction p. 53.
[733] 'I did not love my self. I nourished for it heaps of murky feelings, since I knew its weakness and my attraction, caused by it, for every fleeting sensation of pain that suddenly spread on a man's face in front of me..' Rīḥān. *Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī*, p. 73. On p. 79 the narrator declares to hate her self and the attraction for pain with which she was born, as if it was a genetic defect!
[734] For Khamīs the protagonist enjoys and is attracted by pain and suffering men 'as if they were her salvation in this world'; Khamīs praises the directness, neutrality and precision with which the author conveys the protagonist's intimate secrets and perturbations. See Khamīs. *Op. cit.*

child, like romance film heroines, always daydreaming, absorbed into her own thoughts, to the point of forgetting where she is, addicted to reading romances, a failure in mathematics, a master of Arabic grammar and composition.[735] The only person who appreciates her is her father:

> كنت أتقاسم وإياه الكثير من الملامح والطباع. كان مطمئنا في مراهقتي إلي وإلى هدوئي وتعقلي عكس البنات في الشارع. لم يكن يفهم سببا لشرودهن وتصعلكهن بلا هدف، ولا استطاع أن يتبين متعة في ذلك. كنت مثله الذي لا يتوانى عن التباهي به كوني قارئة نهمة لاشيء يشغلني غير كتبي.[736]

Her father trusted her and boasted about her because they had many elements in common, because of her inner qualities that distinguished her from other girls and because of her love for books that kept her away from other forms of entertainment in which other girls indulged and that her father could not appreciate. All these features made of Bahījah the ideal daughter for her father, who spoiled her and encouraged her love for books.

Apart from him, all the other people surrounding her disapprove of her in some way. Her Arabic teacher, despite his admiration for her mastery of grammar and composition, reproaches her for her marks in mathematics. Her classmates laugh at her when her teacher ridicules her in front of the whole class because of her absent-mindedness. Her religion teacher prophesies perdition for her and all girls who read romances. As an adult her aunt mocks her celibacy.[737] Her sternest critic though is her mother. In her constant distraction Bahījah, still a child, often damages her mother's treasured belongings while cleaning them, hence getting scolded and warned about her failure as a future housewife and the horrible fate awaiting the poor fellow who

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[735] See Rīḥān. *Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī*, p. 73 for her unrealism, pp. 73-4 for her distraction, daydreaming and absorption, p. 75 for her addiction to reading, pp. 74-5 for her school achievements and failures.

[736] 'I shared with him a lot of features and inclinations. When I was adolescent he trusted me, my calm, my intelligence, the opposite of the girls in the streets. He could not understand why they were wandering around, roaming aimlessly, he could not see any pleasure in that. I was his ideal, about which he could not refrain from boasting, I was an avid reader that nothing but books kept busy.' *Ibid.* p. 78.

[737] See *Ibid.* p. 75 for the Arabic teacher, p. 74 for the classmates, p. 75 for the religion teacher, p. 79 for her aunt.

will marry her.[738] Her mother tries to make a good housewife of her in order to make her palatable for potential suitors and prepare her for married life, but Bahījah prefers another life:

أحببت الحياة المثيرة التي في القصص، كانت تزرع حولي صمتا
لا أدرك قدره. كنت أنزوي رغم وصايا أمي المتشددة بجلي المطبخ
[..] إلا أنني كنت أتجاهلها ثم أفتح الورق وأهيم حيث لا تدري
هي، التي علمناها على كبر كيف تخط اسمها بالكره، لأن ليونة
أصابعها كانت قد قوضتها أشغال البيت المرهقة ..
وحين تأتي ثم تكتشف أنني لم أذعن لأمرها كانت ترميني بكل
فجعها وغصاتها، ثم تقر أنها وحيدة ولا أحد أبدا قلبه على همها. [739]

The most striking element in this paragraph is the divide existing between mother and daughter. The mother is illiterate and she leads a life of sheer domesticity, with which she must be content, since she never complains in the story, prepared by her mother to become a perfect housewife suitable for marriage with no other interest outside household chores, so much that she is averse to writing. She attempts to prepare Bahījah to the same kind of life, acting as a channel of power that relies on her to reach and subject her daughter, just like her own mother had done with her, unconsciously handing down subjection to traditions from generation to generation.[740]

In her attempt she encounters a barrier that she cannot overcome. Education opens up to Bahījah worlds that remain inaccessible and unfathomable for her, generating estrangement between them, which induces the mother to feel lonely and neglected. The latter cannot understand why Bahījah prefers reading to domestic works and even to the popular tales she recounts, but she sees her interest in reading as an obstacle to her mission to make of her a perfect housewife as per tradition. Hence she forbids her to

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[738] See *Ibid.* p. 73.

[739] 'I loved the exciting life that was in the tales, it cultivated around me a silence whose dimensions I did not know. I used to hide in a corner, despite my mother sternly ordering me to clean the kitchen [..] but I feigned to ignore her, opened the pages and roamed over places unknown to her, whom we taught how to write her name late in life and with aversion, because the exhausting house works had already destroyed her fingers' flexibility.
When she came and discovered that I had not obeyed her order she blamed me for her torment and her laments, then she stated that she was alone and that nobody ever had her worries at heart.' *Ibid.* p. 75.

[740] See Introduction p.17 for Foucault's description of power mechanisms.

read and gives her tasks to accomplish. When ordering Bahījah what and how she must carry out, the mother uses a disciplinary power that is intentional, since it aims at fabricating a traditional housewife out of her, and not subjective, because the mother is not the person setting the aims (she lacks the tools and the capability to do it), but only a vehicle of a power that does not find a smooth way ahead. Because the mother cannot access Bahījah's world, her knowledge of it is precluded.

Therefore knowledge here cannot increase the effects of power, which is further hindered by Bahījah's resistance,[741] which is so placid that it could seem apathy. She pretends to ignore her mother's orders and rants, admitting that she is good;[742] she does not express her feelings about her rebukes, nor does she react to them; she is unaffected by the victim role her mother plays as a last resort; she disregards all the disapproval expressed by her teachers, classmates, aunt. Nevertheless she does not give up reading her books and daydreaming to her heart's content, as though she were refractory to everybody's words, living the exciting life of the tales beyond her apparent apathy, which is shaken only once many years later. This happens when Bahījah is already a mature lady living on her own, during a visit of her aunt and brothers, whom she informs that she has written many books that she will publish. While her aunt simply looks at her coldly without a word, her youngest brother expresses his scepticism:

ـ أنت تكتبين ؟؟.. وما ذا تعرفين لتكتبين ؟؟..

أنظر بلا راحة نحوه، أحول فقط عيني باتجاهه وأنا أداعب
بعصبية خصل شعري المبعثرة :

ـ ومن أدراك أنني لاأعرف ؟؟..

ذلك الشقي ولد في نفسي الرغبة في نتفه .. [743]

[741] See *Ibid.* pp. 17-20 for Foucault's definitions of power, resistance, relationship power-knowledge and discipline.
[742] See Rīḥān. *Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī*, p. 73.
[743] '— You write??.. And what do you know in order to write??..
I looked uneasily towards him, I only turned my eyes in his direction while I played nervously with some locks of my scattered hair:
— And who informed you that I do not know??..
That insolent fellow generated in me the desire to tear his hair out..' *Ibid.* p. 80.

The brother's remarks are biased against Bahījah, about whose lifestyle he clearly does not know much if he ignores that she writes. Nonetheless as a man of the family he feels entitled to doubt her capacity to write and her knowledge because she is a woman. Bahījah's external reaction to this disbelief is composed as usual; she only looks at him uneasily and cleverly disputes his source of information, knowing already that he cannot respond because his position is based on prejudice and not on evidence. However her nervous play with her hair locks and her tacit desire to tear his hair out indicate how irked she is. Her customary placidity turns into irritation, because her brother doubts two elements, i.e. knowledge and writing, to which she devotes her adult life, like she devoted her youth to reading and daydreaming.

As a youngster those activities helped the formation of her subjectivity by lessening the effects of maternal discipline and social pressure, and allowed it to be different from the subjectivities of other girls of her age, whom she never tried to imitate because she loathed their fixation with marriage and sexual pleasure.[744] In her adulthood writing is a technique to care for the self formed in her youth, a version of Foucault's 'recounting of the self' deprived of its social dimension because of her loneliness.[745] Bahījah has with her self and with others a relationship based on mastery. She can control her passion for suffering men and the intense love that inhabits her[746] so much that she is celibate, she masters her desire to tear her brother's hair out, she is not irritated by all the disapproval and mockery she encounters, she does not react even to her aunt's painful blow in her lower abdomen.[747]

Hence it could be said that Bahījah with her mastery and care of the self is an ethical subject,[748] since she escapes all forms of dependence and enslavement, belongs to herself only, has complete and unchallenged authority over herself, escapes the normalising pressure of a familial and social entourage that tries and fails to enslave her, although it successfully marginalises her because she is not normalised.

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[744] *Ibid.* p. 76.
[745] The quote is in Introduction p. 15; details of the techniques of the self are in *Ibid.* pp. 26-31.
[746] Rīḥān. *Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī*, p. 78.
[747] *Ibid.* p. 79.
[748] See Introduction pp. 26-31 for details on the ethical subject.

ولم تشد أحد من العابرين هالتي التي جعلها الحزن فيما
بعد والكبر، بل كانوا ينظرون إلي بانفلات ثم يغيبون. 749

لكنهم صاروا فيما بعد ينظرون نحوي
بخوف وحنان، وصاروا يكثرون من زياراتهم التفقدية لي كأنني
في مشفى عكس حالهم تماما معي .. كما كان يحدث في السابق .. 750

Passers-by look at Bahījah uneasily without approaching her because she does not correspond to the image of woman they are used to in their social context. She is unmarried despite her mature age, lives on her own, writes books, is quite solitary, oozes sadness, all things that normalised women do not do. They do not know how to deal with such an unusual woman and keep away from her. Her relatives' attitude is even more discriminatory. After knowing that she writes, which is an unusual feminine activity in their context, they look at her with fear and compassion, as though she were an insane woman sectioned in a psychiatric hospital and hence dangerous and in need of surveillance. This enables them to arrogate to themselves the role of overseers who visit her often with the intent to examine her. She is relegated to the position of object subjected to her relatives' examining gaze,[751] but this is not a novelty for Bahījah, who is accustomed to the position of 'bizarre member' of the family, constantly singled out since she was a child. Although this has not induced her to recant and normalise, it has affected her:

لم أتزوج .. كل من تقدم إلي كان عاريا من الإحساس بمذاق
الألم ولا يرقى إلى مدارج حلمي، والذين راهنت عليهم من الحزانى
فشلت في جرهم إلى الشغف الذي يسكنني، والرابض استعدادا إلى
فهمهم والطبطبة على ظهورهم المكدودة.
لهذا لم أعد أحب نفسي .. 752

749 '..my halo, which was later beautified by sadness and age, did not pull any of the passers-by; instead they looked at me evasively and disappeared.' Rīḥān. *Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī*, p. 79.

750 '..but later they [the relatives] started looking towards me with fear and compassion, and they started coming and examining me more often, as if I was in a hospital that completely upturned their position towards me.. as it used to happen before..' *Ibid.* p. 80.

751 See note 530 p.165 for examining gaze.

752 'I did not marry.. Everyone that approached me was deprived of any sensitivity to the taste of pain and did not measure up to my dreams, while those sad ones, on whom I staked, I failed to draw them to the intense love that inhabited me, crouching and waiting, ready to understand them and caress their fatigued backs.
Because of this I did not love myself anymore..' Rīḥān. *Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī*, p. 78.

Bahījah never married because her suitors had none of her sensitivity to pain or did not correspond to her ideal husband image and because she failed to attract the men she liked despite her intense feelings towards them, hence she stopped loving herself. The last sentence reveals two elements: she stopped loving herself because she could not find a suitable husband, albeit she had loved herself and felt at ease with her self before despite the mockery and disapproval she faced;[753] despite the protagonist's refusal to normalise, she has somewhat internalised the discrimination operated by those who are normalised, who induce her to feel inadequate and to isolate herself, which is individualisation produced by the normalising power of discipline, as O'Grady would put it.

She feels inadequate because she lacks the wedlock, mandatory for women of her age in her society. Her lack of self-love could be a form of self-punishment generated by her failure to marry,[754] and/or a consequence of her unfinished subjectivation that cannot be accomplished because she cannot establish intersubjective reciprocal relationships with anyone.[755] Having lost her father, the only person who appreciated her, not having a loving marital relationship, being surrounded by relatives who consider her nearly insane and others who avoid her, she is clearly in an environment that considers her inferior and not equal, relegates her to the margins of society and by so doing prevents her from accomplishing the creation of her self 'like a work of art'.[756]

In such situation writing for Bahījah is also a surrogate for the intersubjective reciprocal relationships she cannot have, the space in which she can express her effort of subjectivation, as Hafez indicated, and the imposed separation from the community that marginalises her as an adult, while as a child she sought separation from her despised peer group.[757] The protagonist of this short story hence comes across as a non-normalised,

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[753] This is clearly indicted in *Ibid.* p. 74.
[754] See Introduction pp. 15, 21 for Foucault's definition of individualisation, pp. 41-2 for O'Grady's reflections about the consequences of individualisation and self-punishment.
[755] Both de Beauvoir and Foucault underline the importance of such relations in the subjectivation; see *Ibid.* p. 52 for de Beauvoir's contribution and pp. 30-2 for Foucault's.
[756] This is Foucault's expression; see *Ibid.* p. 15.
[757] See *Ibid.* pp. 57-8 for more details about subjectivation and separation from the community expressed in short stories.

quasi-ethical subject,[758] who lives and cares for herself in ways that in her society are untraditional, ahead of her times and cause her marginalisation, which she nonetheless endures.

To conclude, these short stories share a constant narrative strategy that is perceivable in the quantity of speech of the analysed characters and in the choice of the narrator. Although the grandmother speaks more than her granddaughter, which could create the initial impression that the grandmother dominates the narration, it is the granddaughter who dominates the narration, since she is the autodiegetic narrator and the only focal character[759] through whose viewpoint the grandmother is described. The granddaughter hence is not subjected in the narrative text, or in the narration process.

The fourteen-year-old resists her mother's attempt to subject her and at the same time she is the one who controls the narration, being the autodiegetic narrator and the only focal character. In this short story the only characters who have the right to speak (apart from the protagonist) are her mother, the mothers reprimanding their daughters, the women of the community maligning the policeman, the older girls frightening the younger ones. They are all characters with a subjecting role.[760] The victims of this narrative (Maryam and the policeman's daughter) instead have no voice, hence creating a correspondence between subjection in the narrative and subjection in the narration process.

In "Ḥālah" we hear the voices of Bahījah's parents, relatives and teacher, who try to induce the protagonist to do something or disapprove of her (excluding her father). Nevertheless Bahījah speaks briefly at the end of the story and is the autodiegetic narrator and focal character, hence she resists attempts of subjection in the narrative and controls the narration process at the same time. Thus all three short stories share the same narrative strategy: only characters who take the position of resisting subjects in their narratives take

[758] See *Ibid.* pp. 26-8 for Foucault's definition.
[759] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, pp. 252-3 for narrators and pp. 206-7 for focalisation.
[760] The only exception is the protagonist playmate that invites her to play; see Rīḥān. *Ajniḥah li-l-Ḥakī*, p. 17.

the role of narrators, as though they were the only ones deemed able to narrate their selves and other characters'.

Another shared element in these stories is that all subjecting female characters endeavour to establish with their female counterparts relations of inequality and age-based hierarchy that are endemic in Arab patriarchal connective systems, as Joseph indicates. The subjecting characters are all family members who exploit seniority, kinship and the selves with fluid boundaries entailed by connectivity to relegate the protagonists to the position of dominated objects that they can easily manipulate.[761] Their counterparts are resisting subjects, although in different manners. The granddaughter responds gently and subtly, striving to initiate with her grandmother a relationship based on equality and respect, but her attempts are misunderstood. The fourteen-year-old is a typically confrontational adolescent, allegedly ready to sacrifice her familial relationship by running away in the fierce defence of her freedom. Bahījah resists by pursuing the path of the ethical subject and of writing, placidly and sadly enduring pressure and marginalisation.

2) Tunisian short story writers

a) Rashīdah al-Turkī

Biographical information about Rashīdah al-Turkī is scarce. Her date of birth is not quoted in any of the bibliographical texts available, nor on the internet. Some internet articles only mention that she is a member of the Tunisian Writers' Union, works as a translator and writes short stories.[762]

Al-Turkī shares with several of her contemporaries the interest in the outcasts,[763] with one particular kind recurrent in several stories of *ʿAṣr al-Hanīn* (The Age of Nostalgia): the Tunisian (woman or man) who migrates to Europe to fulfil her/his dreams, which nevertheless are shattered, and leads a life of solitude and estrangement. Most stories are imbued with such an

[761] See Joseph. *Op. cit.*, pp. 453,459-60 for Arab patriarchal connective systems.
[762] See bibliography for details of her two collections.
[763] See Tunisian context pp. 100-2 above.

atmosphere of defeat and frustration that several characters contemplate or accomplish suicide. In such stories the interior worlds of the forlorn protagonists, among which there are several men, prevail on external reality and are sometimes exposed through stream of consciousness.

"Al-Marāyā" (Mirrors) is the short story of *ᶜAṣr al-Ḥanīn* I have selected because it abounds with the protagonist's reflections about the self, free will, agency and several other issues, presented within a modern structure and an unusual manner of regulating the speed of the *récit*. In a Chekhovian fashion the story's structure is based on an apparently petty event (a dinner conversation) that has sweeping and dramatic implications, because it induces the protagonist/narrator Īmān to question her self-perception, feelings, objectives. Notwithstanding its apparent triviality, the dinner conversation is actually a Joycean epiphany through which previously unknown aspects of her husband Jalāl's personality and beliefs become known and cast some doubt upon her knowledge of Jalāl, the basis and purpose of their marriage, their reciprocal feelings.

Despite the importance of this event, at which Īmān hints several times,[764] it is not until the tenth page of this sixteen-page story that the event is revealed to be a dinner conversation and that its content is fully disclosed, occupying the whole tenth page. This postponement in the narrative increases the reader's expectations, builds up dramatic tension and makes of the narration of this conversation a sort of watershed between the situation described in the first nine pages and the one described in the last six pages. Although criticism of Jalāl's behaviours and motives is expressed in the first nine pages and despite the fact that the conversation precedes its recounting in the *histoire*,[765] it is only after relating the incident that Īmān realises how selfish and malicious Jalāl is, questions her love for him and decides to leave him.[766] Thus the narration of the event, rather than the event itself, appears as

[764] Hints are in Rashīdah al-Turkī. *ᶜAṣr al-Ḥanīn: Majmūᶜah Qaṣaṣiyyah.* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ādāb, 1990), pp. 39 (first page of the story), 41, 42, 46; the tenth page is p. 48.
[765] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, pp. 71-2.
[766] See al-Turkī. *Op. cit.*: before the narration she proclaims to love him four times (pp. 39, 40, 41, 43), and she hopes many times to discuss the matter with him and convince him (pp. 39,

what allows her to fully comprehend the gravity of Jalāl's opinions and their implications.

Considering also that Īmān is the narrator and an amateur writer whose 'art reflects the reality of life',[767] the author might here be suggesting, in a Chekhovian turn, that it is the aesthetic experience of literary creation that leads to true reality, not common experience. Īmān had had six months to experience Jalāl's deception and false promises[768] without reaching any conclusion. It is only when she turned the conversation into a narrative, i.e. when she turned the common experience into an aesthetic experience, that she could grasp the true Jalāl.

As regards the speed of the *récit*, with Īmān reading the time twice[769] it is possible to calculate that the speed is extremely slow in the first fifteen and a half pages of the story, which cover only about three hours of the time of the *histoire*, including the analepsis of the dinner conversation. These pages are hence a descriptive pause, to use Genette's definition. In the last half page of the story the speed changes from the very slow descriptive pause to an isochronous scene in the present tense. This last part contains the sentence 'she remembers when she was a slim woman', from which it can be inferred that in the *récit* there is an implicit ellipsis of several years between the descriptive pause, which takes place six months after the wedding, and the scene.[770]

The descriptive pause's speed is extremely slow because, notwithstanding the presence of several metric time references, it is subjective time[771] that prevails, the pause being devoted to the protagonist's reflections rather than actions. Her reflections can be divided into two categories: those concerning the individual and the self and those concerning heterosexual love relationships in general and her relationship with Jalāl in particular. Through both categories of reflections the story shows how the deterioration of Īmān's

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41, 43, 44). After the recounting she questions her love four times in only half a page (p. 49), she wants to leave him (p. 53), and she notes his selfishness (pp. 49, 52) and malice (p. 48).

[767] This is how Īmān describes the literature she wants to produce in *Ibid.* p. 51.

[768] These are clearly described in *Ibid.* pp. 40-2, 46.

[769] See *Ibid.* pp. 41, 51.

[770] See Genette. *Op. cit.,* pp. 122-41 for narrative speed, isochrony, descriptive pause, scene, implicit ellipsis; p. 82 for analepsis.

[771] See above p. 79 for this modernist narrative technique.

relationship with Jalāl and the revelation of his ideological stance towards women drastically affect Īmān's beliefs in both fields. Considering the first category's reflections, Īmān starts from a mature and conscious ideological position:

إن الـذات هي مقدرة عـلى الـوجـود. أكـثر مـا هي وجـود أي المقدرة على تحقيق الفعل الذي نصبو إليه. تجسيد إمكاناتنا فعلاً. أي تلك الإمكانيات التي هي لنا وحدنا دون تـدخل أي آخـر في تحقيقها. [..] لماذا نحفظ هـذه الأشياء ولا نعمل بها؟ [772]

النفس [..] تضـع نفسها في المكـان المناسب لهـا أليست هي المسؤولة عن نفسها؟ [..] العالم لا تنظمـه فقط منظمات ولا رؤسـاء دول؛ العالم بحاجة إلى إنسان، فرد واحد ينظم عالمه الداخلي الخاص به أولاً [773]

These quotes convey the image of a self that enables human beings' agency, hence of a self that is activity rather than essence, like Foucault and de Beauvoir theorised.[774] Agency brings with it responsibility. Human beings are responsible for what they achieve and choose, for their success or failure to utilise their potentials to the full, for the place they occupy in the world. They can have an active political role. They need to help governments and organisations to bring order into the world by establishing order in their own selves first. The picture of the subject drawn in these quotes is that of a determining subject who has potentials and aspirations, agency to realise them, responsibility, mastery over him/herself, who chooses her/his place in the world, has a fundamental political role, which are some of the ethical subject's features Foucault has expounded.[775]

Nevertheless the questions Īmān asks herself reveal that she has doubts about the soul's responsibility for itself and that she cannot understand why

[772] '..the self is an ability to exist. More than being existence, i.e. it is the ability to accomplish the action to which we aspire. To materialise our abilities into action. That is to say those potentials that belong to us only without anybody else interfering in their accomplishment. [..] Why do we preserve these things and we do not work with them?' Al-Turkī. *Op. cit.*, p. 42.
[773] '..the soul [..] puts itself in the place suitable for it, is it not responsible for itself? [..] the world do not put it in order only organisations and heads of states; the world needs the human being, the individual to put in order his inner, personal world first'. *Ibid.* pp. 44-5. The context clarifies that throughout the text the narrator is not referring to the soul of the humanist or religious tradition, but to the Foucauldian 'soul', i.e. the self; see Introduction pp. 18-9.
[774] See *Ibid.* pp. 27, 50.
[775] See *Ibid.* pp. 26-8.

human beings waste their talents by not utilising them in spite of the self that enables their utilisation. It seems that Īmān is struggling to convince herself that the philosophical theories she is proclaiming are indeed true, since when she examines how marriage has affected her self a quite different image of subject emerges:

كفى نفاقاً يا نفسي! إن علاقتك كاذبة مع هذا العالم الذي يسجنونك فيه. إنك مسكونة بهواجس لأفكار موجودة، لكنها عقيمة، لا تثمر، لا تعطي.

[..] تسجن روحك في قضبان تبدو لك من ذهب. أين المبادرة التي تؤمنين بها؟ الجو من حولك مقنع.. مقنع.. إلى حد المرض. وممنوعة أنت.. ممنوعة أنا من خوض العالم، الحياة. مشنوقة أنا بحبل من حرير!!

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Īmān admits that all the potentials, abilities, responsibilities, etc. she has previously attributed to the self in general have turned into theoretical, unproductive obsessions for her self. 'They' have imprisoned her self in a world that strives to convince it to abandon its non-normalised beliefs and projects in exchange for a comfortable domestic lifestyle (symbolised by the golden bars and the silk thread). Despite having proclaimed her faith in the self's agency only a few lines above, in this passage she uses the verb *yasjunūnaki*, which has 'they' as implicit subject, the passive verb *tusjan* and the passive participles *mamnūᶜah* and *mashnūqah*, which put her in the role of grammatical patient receiving the action of these passive voices. For most of this paragraph she also addresses and scolds her self as though it were a separate entity, but in the line before the last she switches from the 'you' to the 'I', as if she suddenly realised that it is her, Īmān, not an abstract entity, who is passively acted upon and not acting. Her faith in her agency is starting to falter and her doubts spread fast to a universal level:

لكن من يصنع درب

الإنسان، بل من ينزع من طريقه الحواجز؟ الإنسان نفسه أم ظروفه؟ 777

776 'Enough with your hypocrisy my soul! Your relation with this world in which they imprison you is false. You are inhabited by obsessions of existing ideas, but they are sterile, do not bear fruit, do not give. [..] your spirit has been imprisoned within bars that seem of gold to you. Where is the enterprise in which you believe? The atmosphere around you is convincing.. convincing.. to the extent of an illness. And you are forbidden.. I am forbidden from throwing myself into the world, into life. I am hanged by a silk thread!!' Al-Turkī. *Op. cit.*, p. 45.

The tone of this section, which incidentally is placed in the *récit* after the recounting of the conversation, is at variance with the confident tone of the first two quotations. This series of questions exposes how doubts are penetrating Īmān's previous unwavering faith and changing her perspective. Once she believed that the subject could choose his/her place, now she does not know whether the subject or the conditions create her/his path and which one of the two can remove eventual obstacles on the path. This reconsideration of her philosophical beliefs has been triggered by her marriage, as it becomes clear from Īmān's considerations about her relationship with Jalāl before and after marriage, which then initiate the second category of reflections, i.e. those concerning heterosexual love relationships in general and her relationship with Jalāl in particular.

Īmān had 'unusual dreams'[778] before getting married. She was a journalist and a translator and wanted to become a writer too. During their engagement she had known Jalāl as a man who had his own unusual projects, a deep love for her and appreciation of her dreams, ready to join forces with her to fulfil their aspirations once married. He was interested in literature, art and her literary experiments, a good communicator and ready to discuss great issues.[779] With marriage Īmān stopped working outside on Jalāl's request to become temporarily a full-time housewife.

Six months later she is still a full-time housewife, Jalāl has forgotten his promises, stopped showing any interest for her writings and prevented her from publishing them. He refuses to discuss anything behind familial, domestic and trivial practical matters and spends more time writing letters to his male friends than talking to her.[780] This relationship, which had communication at its core before marriage, after marriage is dominated by the silence Jalāl imposes on Īmān when they are together and that overshadows their house and Īmān even when she is alone.[781] With his behaviours Jalāl had wilfully interrupted

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[777] But who creates the human being's path, or rather who removes obstacles from his path? The human being himself or his conditions?' *Ibid.* p. 50.
[778] This or 'unusual projects' are expressions often repeated in the text.
[779] See al-Turkī. *Op. cit.,* pp. 40, 43.
[780] See *Ibid.* pp. 40, 43, 46.
[781] The text abounds with words meaning silence and their related verbs, which are repeated once on pp. 46, 53, twice on p. 41, four times on p. 43, three times on pp. 44, 50.

any form of serious communication with Īmān before the infamous dinner conversation, but Īmān had not imagined why until she heard his rigmarole about women, and in particular women writers and working women:

لقد صرح جلال فعلا وبدون تردد أن المرأة للبيت فقط. إنها غير قادرة على التفكير فعلاً. إن النساء اللواتي يكتبن إنما لا يكتبن إلا للتبرج، لتصوير نواقصهن في الجنس، أو استعباد الرجل. وفي كلمة واحدة التبرج أو لفت النظر إليهن وليس إلى كتاباتهن. [..]

ـ تحاول المرأة التوفيق بين عملها وبين بيتها، صحيح أن هناك محاولة من طرف بعضهن، لكني لا أثق في ذلك، أرني امرأة عاملة لا تحتاج إلى مساعدة الزوج أو غيره. ادخلوا بيوتهن وتفرجوا. ثم إن الزوج إنه يتعب كامل اليوم وهو بحاجة إلى امرأة تستقبله بعد عناء الشغل.

وجه نظراته مبتسماً إليّ: أليس كذلك يا إيمان؟

وأخذ يكمل حديثه الآخر [782]

Īmān did not expect this discourse, not its wording and timing, which Jalāl has craftily chosen. They are having dinner at home with some guests when Jalāl embarks on his monologue, sure that Īmān cannot dare to answer back in front of guests. In order to appear modern to his guests Jalāl tries to give a logical gloss to a centuries-old discourse of patriarchal exploitation with a couple of smart words; in order not to appear overpowering he asks smiling for Īmān's approval at the end of his monologue, while he really does not leave her any space to reply. These are all strategies by which Jalāl successfully guides Īmān's conduct.[783]

The implications of Jalāl's words are profound. Considering that modern philosophy after Descartes has conceived the subject as a *res cogitans*,[784] denying women's ability to think means denying women the status of subjects.

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[782] 'Jalāl explained in fact and without hesitation that women belong to the house only. They are actually not able to think. Women who write do so only for exhibitionism, for describing their sexual deficiencies or subjecting men. In one word for exhibitionism or drawing attention to themselves and not to their writings. [..]

— Women attempt to reconcile work with their house, it is true that there are attempts of some of them, but I do not believe in this, show me a working woman who does not need her husband's help or somebody else's. Enter their houses and observe. Then the husband toils the whole day and he needs a woman that greets him after his work's toil.

He turned his eyes on me smiling: Is it not so Īmān?

And he started finishing his other talk'. *Ibid.* pp. 48-9. Jalāl's opinion about women writers recalls literary critics' opinions quoted by al-Zayyāt; see above p. 59.

[783] I am paraphrasing Foucault's definition of power relations; see Introduction p. 18.

[784] See *Ibid.* p. 12.

Jalāl considers Īmān (and any other woman) an inferior object unable to think that he faces as the only subject and master since he is a thinking male.[785] He prefers to communicate with his thinking male friends, whom he considers subjects equal to him, rather than with his inferior object wife that could not possibly understand him or elaborate anything worth reading or listening to.

The way in which the first two sentences of this paragraph have been organised suggests that Jalāl finds a causal link between the two: it is because they cannot think that women belong only to the house. This causal link would have been sufficient to logically, though arguably, justify why women should not write or do any work requiring the ability to think that they supposedly lack, hence limiting themselves to exclusively domestic roles. Instead of stopping there Jalāl pushes his discourse too far and labels women writers, and indirectly Īmān, 'exhibitionists', a label through which he individualises[786] and humiliates Īmān, and denies any artistic value of women's literary endeavours. He also unwittingly reveals between the lines of the last paragraph that women should be relegated to a domestic role so that men could be spared housework's burden or cost and always have unpaid servants ready to satisfy their needs when they return home. Īmān grasps the full meaning of his words, which dramatically transforms her vision of him:

واكتشفت كم هو قبيح في أنانيته، هذا الرجل.
أمن أجل هذا لم يعد يطرح أساساً موضوع عملي. وكتاباتي؟[787]

لقد تأكدت الآن أنه رجل عادي.[788]

Beyond his pretentious pseudo-philosophical (and questionable) posture Īmān can see his selfish will to deny her role of subject in order to condemn her to a subordinate role of object. He cannot accept her aspirations to write and work outside the house, because any of those activities would distract her from her duty of serving him full-time and would force him either to personally contribute to housekeeping duties or to pay a domestic help. To relegate Īmān

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[785] De Beauvoir found and analysed the same attitude in the traditional French patriarchal society; see *Ibid.* p. 53.
[786] See *Ibid.* pp. 15, 21.
[787] 'I found out how despicable he is in his selfishness, this man. Is it because of this that fundamentally he did not touch anymore the subject of my work. And of my writings?' Al-Turkī. *Op. cit.*, p. 49.
[788] 'I have now ascertained that he is an ordinary man.' *Ibid.* p. 52.

to a purely domestic life, while he enjoys life in the world, is for him easier, more comfortable and cheaper. While Īmān believed to have married an unusual man with extraordinary aspirations that wanted to build with her an uncommon marital life, she now comprehends that Jalāl is only an ordinary man who deceived her by philosophising on great ideals with the aim to trap her in a subjecting marriage.[789] This bitter realisation overshadows Īmān's once positive vision of marriage and makes her believe that Jalāl's way of managing their relationship is the rule, as it appears in her universalising considerations:

العلاقة الزوجية التي هي
أيضاً حرب من نوع آخر يجب أن يظهر الرجل فيه شطارته للمرأة
بطرق التعسف أحياناً وعن طريق القبلات أحياناً أخرى. [790]

She describes the spousal relationship like a power relation in which the husband must appear as the cleverest, i.e. as the superior subject in control, and in order to do so he does not hesitate to overbear his wife either by straightforward compulsion or by less brutally-looking emotional pressure, symbolised by the kisses. In other parts of the story she reminds herself how marriage is normally conceived and what it is socially expected to entail or not, and defines 'stupidity' her own previous conceptions of men, love and marriage.[791] Now her unusual dreams have been replaced by her acidic reflections about the cooperation between society and men in their common subjecting mission:

ابتداء من الحمل وانتهاء بالإجهاض أو الولادة. مروراً بطبيب
الأعصاب لترميم الأعصاب الفالتة من الضغط. (أو من الإحباط).
ضغط الأصوات الداخلية. فالزوج يمثل دور الرقابة السياسية على
لسان مشاعر الزوجة. ويحكم المجتمع وفي مقدمته الزوج بأن الزوجة
متعبة. أعصابها مشدودة. باردة جنسياً. لقد تغيرت.. وهي التي
كانت.. ولا يبحثون عن السبب.. أبداً.. [792]

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[789] Īmān refers several times to Jalāl's (and men's) deceitful techniques, breach of promises, traps. See *Ibid.* pp. 40, 42, 46, 48, 49.

[790] '.. the marital relationship that is also a war of another kind in which the man must show the woman his cunningness through bullying sometimes and through kisses some other times.' *Ibid.* p. 44.

[791] See *Ibid.* pp. 40, 44, 51, 53.

[792] 'Beginning from pregnancy and ending with abortion or childbirth. Passing by the neurologist to repair the nerves escaping pressure (or frustration). The pressure of the interior voices. The husband plays the role of political overseer of the tongue of the wife's feelings.

The marriage institution and husbands are depicted as instruments through which society controls women and directs them towards predetermined goals (pregnancy-abortion/childbirth), which here are presented as inescapable. The frustration, pressure and repression this system causes in wives are firstly controlled by husbands, who keep wives' tongues at bay, so that they do not verbalise their feelings and publicly embarrass them. When husbands alone do not suffice to suffocate wives' feelings or when wives do not keep to the predetermined goals, society, represented by neurologists and husbands, intervenes to judge that these once excellent wives have changed for the worse. The labels tired, nervous, frigid are used to individualise[793] wives and invalidate their words and actions, while nobody attempts to understand their problems' causes.

In this passage marriage has the same role of the central tower in the *Panopticon*, and the husband the same role of the main overseer who exercises a power that in reality belongs to society, represented by the institution of the *Panopticon*. The mere fact of being married is a constant psychological presence in wives' lives, which induces in them the consciousness of being potentially spied on and judged at all times, even if husbands are absent. Therefore they abide by the rules established for married women because they feel continuously under their husbands' gazes, and this induces them to interiorise the gazes and, as Foucault would say it, to become the principles of their own subjection by allowing the constraints of power to play upon themselves.[794] If they do not abide by the rules they are classified as tired/nervous/frigid. Similarly the 18th century strategy Foucault defined hysterization classified women who did not perform their productive roles as 'hysteric' and hence needing the cares of medicine.[795] The roles this strategy attributed to women are not much different from the roles Jalāl wants Īmān to perform full-time: production and care of children, production and preservation of a familial space.

Society, with the husband at the front, judges the wife tired. Her nerves are tense. Frigid. She changed.. She that was.. And they do not look for the cause.. never..' *Ibid.* pp. 51-2.

[793] See Introduction pp. 15, 21.

[794] See *Ibid.* p. 21.

[795] See *Ibid.* p. 25.

Notwithstanding all the noble thoughts about individuals' agency she had previously enunciated, in the last two quotes Īmān tends to stress so much the role of society in determining the 'rules of the game' that individuals' roles become blurred. It seems that she considers society more responsible of her situation than Jalāl, whom she even justifies once,[796] despite the fact that they are both Arabs living in a socio-historic context (contemporary London) in which the marital dynamics she describes are neither prevalent nor inexorable, and in which Jalāl has the concrete possibility to distance himself from those dynamics. His dinner discourse shows that he has no intention to do so though, because he fundamentally agrees with those dynamics, hence he is more responsible for Īmān's misery than she thinks.

Īmān does not evaluate her own responsibilities. Despite her intellectual maturity, her professional abilities that would allow her to earn a living and the belief in the individual's agency proclaimed earlier, Īmān wastes several chances to express her disagreement with Jalāl's attitude towards her and with his ideological stance towards women. She is satisfied with intentions of resistance that remain theoretical, a mild self-criticism that does not produce any result, and a pathetic questioning of women's agency.[797] Being in a power relation she has a whole range of possibilities, actions, behaviours available to her and can resist Jalāl's attempt to determine her conduct,[798] even more so in the socio-historical context in which she is singularly situated, in which she has the opportunity to defy her entourage's social customs concerning femininity without extreme consequences. She is not situated in one of those contexts in which the transgression of femininity norms entails total social exclusion or death, which are extreme forms of de Beauvoirian devaluation.[799] Nevertheless she does not take advantage of the opportunities of resistance she has, since the final scene shows her still living with Jalāl:

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[796] See Al-Turkī. *Op. cit.,* p. 42.
[797] See *Ibid.* pp. 42-3, 49 (wasted chances); 44, 46, 48-9, 53-4 (theoretical resistance); 42, 44 (self-criticism); on p. 50 she asks: 'Who decides a woman's future, her or her husband?'
[798] See Introduction pp. 17-8 for Foucault's theories about power relations and resistance.
[799] See *Ibid.* pp. 50-1.

الرجل البدين يجثم على زوجته فوق السرير. [..]
يجثم ببطنه على بطنها، تتحرك تحته كأنها
تريد الإنفلات لكنها لا تقوى. تتنفس بصعوبة وتبتلع رائحة
الويسكي. ويشخر هو فاتحاً عينيه باحثاً عن شيء تحته. الرجل
البدين يريد امتلاكها فقط، مثل كل المرات، لا يحدثها عن الحب
أبداً. [..] بعد قليل يفرغ كل شيء.. ويتركها جانباً.. ويقول
لها بعد أن يدير ظهره. أيقظيني غداً الساعة التاسعة.. [..]
تستدير هي إلى الجهة الأخرى محاولة أن لا تلمس ظهره. وتغمض
عينيها على صورة رجل آخر تملأ بها فراغ ليلها.

This graphic concluding scene describes a private moment in the spouses' lives that reflects the customary dynamics of their relationship also outside their bed. Īmān is overborne ('she moves under him') by a man who strangles her aspirations ('she breathes with difficulty'), who considers her only an object at his disposal ('something under him') he can use and put aside ('he leaves her aside') after use. Love and Īmān's needs are not even mentioned. As for Īmān she vaguely tries to resist ('she moves under him as if she wanted to escape'), but she fails and hence remains in her passive position, just tolerating Jalāl's smell ('swallows the smell of whisky') and physical closeness, which she would prefer to avoid, since she tries 'not to touch his back'. As soon as their physical contact finishes each of them turns the back on the other, Jalāl ordering Īmān about as usual, Īmān keeping her customary silence, each of them aloof from the other. In her youth Īmān was enraged by Jalāl's behaviour, although unable to express her rage and resist him. Now she is not enraged anymore, she only tries to find solace from her misery imagining another man who could fill the emptiness aloofness leaves.

This last scene is one of several examples of negative mirroring that occur in this story, in which mirrors recur in the title and in the *récit*,[801] and that have all the common feature of being a mirroring between a past or fictional

[800] 'The fat man lies on his wife on the bed. [..] He lies with his abdomen on hers, she moves under him as if she wanted to escape, but she cannot. She breathes with difficulty and swallows the smell of whisky. He pants opening his eyes, looking for something under him. The fat man wants only to possess her, as always, he never speaks to her about love. [..] In a little while everything finishes.. and he leaves her aside.. and tells her after turning his back. Wake me up tomorrow at nine..[..]
She turns to the other side trying not to touch his back. And she closes her eyes on the image of another man with which she fills the emptiness of her night.' Al-Turkī. *Op. cit.*, pp. 54-5.
[801] Al-Turkī. *Op. cit.*, pp. 39-40, 50-1, 53.

better person and a present worse person: the fiancée Jalāl, who pretended to be an unusual man, is negatively mirrored in the husband Jalāl, an ordinary man; the sad, incommunicative and overweight couple Īmān and Jalāl are in the story's finale is the reverse mirror image of the couple they dreamed to be when they were engaged; the full-time housewife, inert married Īmān is the reverse mirror image of the active, working, unmarried Īmān, and of the writer she aspired to become after marriage.

With marriage Īmān becomes a lonely voice: the loneliness and marginality O'Connor finds typical of short story characters[802] are extreme in Īmān's case because: she is not integrated in a family, since she considers Jalāl a stranger and does not mention a birth family; she is not integrated in her community; she is banned from the world by domesticity.[803] Īmān is a Hamlet who 'merely sits back and monologizes'.[804] As a newly-wed she misperceives herself as distinguished from a community of unambitious housewives with whom she believes she has nothing in common because she is an active subject aiming to develop herself with marriage.[805] Nevertheless she is incapable to practically resist Jalāl's objectification and exploitation and ends up a 'subject subdued to the other by control and dependence'[806] despite her intellectual maturity.

b) Ḥayāh al-Rāyyis

Ḥayāh al-Rāyyis was born in Tunis in 1954 and obtained her university degree in philosophy from Baghdad University in 1981. She has followed several professional paths: journalist, correspondent for the radio, television presenter, philosophy teacher, has worked for the Ministry of Culture; writes philosophical and sociological essays, short stories, plays, poetry, book reviews, which she publishes in paper and electronic format, being a regular contributor to several

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[802] See O'Connor. *Op. cit.,* pp. 5-6.
[803] See al-Turkī. *Op. cit.,* pp. 48, 52-3 for the estrangement from Jalāl; pp. 50-1 for her estrangement from acquaintances; pp. 39, 45, 50 for her 'ban' from the world.
[804] O'Connor. *Op. cit.,* p. 25.
[805] Hafez indicates that the quest for distinction and chosen subjectivity are typical of short stories; see above pp. 58-9.
[806] Foucault's definition; see Introduction p. 12.

internet magazines.[807] She participates in the activities of several cultural bodies: she is the director of the cultural centre '13th August' in the National Union of Tunisian Women, head of the League of Tunisian Women Writers, founder of the Short Story Writers' Club in the Tunisian Writers' Union and member of the Tunisian Writers' Union and of the Association of Tunisian Journalists.

There are conspicuous differences of themes, language registers and narrative styles between the stories of *Layta Hindan..* (If only Hind..)[808] and those posted on www.doroob.com in 2006. The former are set against a background of poverty, with characters who dream of fame and riches, for which some of them are ready to forsake their ideals, dignity or what is dearest to them, although in vain. When the characters are not lost in their dreams, these stories' heterodiegetic narrators present in a matter-of-fact tone and with an everyday language the harsh realities in which the characters, female and male in equal measure, live.[809] The 2006 stories, instead, rotate all[810] around a woman who has left her beloved abroad to return to her homecountry Tunisia and addresses to him her reflections on their relationship; they have only autodiegetic female narrators, a confessional tone and lyrical language.[811]

"Iʿlān Zawāj"[812] (Marriage Advert) is the short story of *Layta Hindan..* I have selected because it skilfully depicts the two female characters (Zahrah and Wafā') as reverse mirror images of each other and how they relate to the femininity norms contemporary customs and fashions have artificially defined,[813] which are epitomised in the advertisement opening the story:

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[807] See bibliography for details.
[808] Ṣāliḥ comments on a story of this collection I do not examine; see Huwaydā Ṣāliḥ. *Op. cit.*
[809] These are features shared by some of al-Rāyyis' contemporaries; see Tunisian context pp. 100-2 above.
[810] One exception: "Ṭuqūs Sirriyyah.... wa Jaḥīm" (Secret Rites.... and Hellfire) that treats an unbalanced marital relationship.
[811] See Huwaydā Ṣāliḥ. *Op. cit.*, for an analysis of these stories.
[812] Ramṣīṣ Muḥammad comments briefly that this story treats sensitive contemporary issues (giving precedence to marriage over personal development, free choice within a consumer society) and subtly exposes and condemns a critical situation; see Ramṣīṣ Muḥammad (18/03/2007): untitled comments posted after "Iʿlān Zawāj". WWW document, URL: http://www.doroob.com/?p=15793, retrieved on 31/07/2008.
[813] De Beauvoir's definition of femininity norms; see Introduction p. 50.

تونسي يبلغ من العمر 39 سنة رجل أعمال
حسن الاخلاق والسمعة أبيض البشرة يريد
التعرف قصد الزواج على فتاة، جميلة الوجه،
طويلة القامة، متوسطة الثقافة، صغيرة السن (25
سنة اقصى تقدير) مخلصة، تقدس الحياة الزوجية
تحسن القيام بشؤون المنزل والاستقبالات، تقبل
الاقامة معه في مكان عمله لا يهم ان كانت أرملة
أو مطلقة.[814]

The dissimilarity and different order of the characteristics listed for the businessman and his prospective wife provide a clear indication of what this social context expects from women and men. The advertiser declares his nationality and age immediately, then uses the word 'businessman' to indicate his profession and also to hint at the substantial earnings associated with such profession, followed by the adjectives 'well behaved' and 'reputable', indicating that nationality, good income, maturity, good behaviour and reputation are socially regarded as the most important features in a man. He leaves his white complexion as last item and does not give any further detail about his physical appearance, as if it is unimportant.

By contrast his prospective wife is socially expected to be first and foremost attractive. Her beauty is more important than her education, which needs to be not high, for fear she could overshadow the businessman, and not low, for fear she could shame him, but just average, so that she can play the role set for her by her husband, whose level of education is instead unimportant. She then needs to be at least fourteen years younger than the businessman, element which places him on a much higher level of maturity and authority, from which he has already defined the roles of the spouses. Being a businessman, the advertiser will maintain the family, while the wife will be completely devoted to family, home and guests, ready to follow her husband, without any mention of her possible professional skills or aspirations. Zahrah's reaction to this advertisement and the subsequent reflections and

[814] 'Tunisian, thirty-nine-year-old, businessman, well behaved, reputable, of white complexion, would like to meet for the purpose of marriage a girl, beautiful face, tall, averagely educated, young (maximum 25 years old), devoted, considers marital life sacred handles well domestic affairs and receptions, accepts to reside with him in his place of work it does not matter if she is a widow or divorcee.' Ḥayāh al-Rāyyis. *Layta Hindan...: Qiṣaṣ.* (Ṣafāqis: Ṣāmid li-l-Nashr wa al-Tawzīᶜ, 1991),p. 35.

analepses[815] reveal how she relates to the prevalent idea of femininity contained in the advertisement and what kind of subject she is:

«رجال الاعمال» لا يحبّون الا النساء الشابات كأنهم
يريدون جمع المال والشباب والشهرة في قبضة واحدة... معهم حق
يجب ان انقذ شبابي من الفقر انا ايضا واتمتع بحياتي خاصة اذا كنت
«جميلة» «طويلة القامة» كما يريدني «رجل الاعمال» تماما...[..]
- «كل هذا الجمال والقوام كان مهدورا مع ذلك «البائس» الذي لا
يقدر شيئا من محاسني.. سيعطيه «رجل الاعمال درسا في تقييم الجمال
عندما يقدّم مهري مثقال وزني ذهبا وفضة بل ذهبا وجوهرا.... [816]

Zahrah completely agrees with the advertiser's patriarchal logic, which requires only beauty, youth, average education and domestic role from women, and with the greediness of businessmen who want money, youth and fame, because these are also her logic and goals. She craves for a way out of poverty and a new life of pleasures, which she plans to obtain by turning her beauty into a commodity she can sell to the businessman. She believes that her commodity was wasted with her previous husband al-Hādī, whom she despises so much that she calls him by the attribute 'miserable man' rather than by his name, because he could not provide her with the only form of appreciation she wants, which is wealth. Nevertheless she is sure that the businessman will show his appreciation of her beauty with gold and gems. She is totally unconcerned by the little information about the businessman's physique or personality contained in the advertisement, because she is only interested in the luxurious lifestyle his profession can buy her, for which she readily accepts to be an object on sale. Throughout the *récit* Zahrah expresses without any reticence her obsession with wealth, her envy for the rich and her indifference towards the ethicality of the means used to accumulate wealth, because she knows that hers is the current widespread mentality. With it she

[815] See Genette. *Op. cit.*, p. 82.

[816] '«Businessmen» love only young women as if they wanted to gather money, youth and fame all at once... They are right, I also must save my youth from poverty and enjoy my life, especially when I am «beautiful» and «tall» just like «the businessman» wants me... [..]
— «All this beauty and physique were wasted with that «miserable man» who did not appreciate my beauties.. «The businessman will teach him how to evaluate beauty when he presents as *mahr* my weight in gold and silver, or rather gold and gems....' Al-Rāyyis. *Op. cit.*, pp.35-7. *Mahr* is the gift the groom gives the bride upon marriage.

justifies her position with al-Hādī[817] and Wafā' when the latter disapproves of her intention to marry the businessman's money:

هل خرجت عن المألوف... هل خالفت التقاليد؟ هل أنا أول امرأة تريد ان تتزوج رجلا غنيا؟

أليس الزواج هو كل ما يريده المجتمع من المرأة؟ [..]

- «بصراحة اسمحي لي أن أقول لك ان الزواج بهذا المعنى يصبح عهرا مقننا». [..]

- «هل أنا عاهر؟ اذ عبرت لك عن رغبتي في الزواج؟ وأنت ماذا تسمين علاقتك بذلك الشاب الذي يعيش معك دون زواج؟

تتماسك «وفاء» لا يبدو عليها الغيظ كأنما كانت تنتظر تلك الملاحظة أو كأنما قد تعودتها... [818]

Zahrah does not see her will to marry money as negative because she believes that by doing so she duly respects social customs that expect women to get married and only imitates other chasers of wealthy bachelors, without any concern for the ethicality of such behaviours and traditions. Hence she cannot understand that by defining marriage for money 'regulated prostitution' Wafā' criticizes as immoral that socially accepted conception of marriage rather than judging her a prostitute. However Zahrah feels personally and unduly offended by Wafā' and retorts the alleged offence on her by comparing her 'desire to marry' and Wafā''s extramarital relationship with her new partner Nabīl. This is an astute way to label Wafā' prostitute between the lines, i.e. to individualise her,[819] because she consciously resists homogenising social norms by cohabiting with a man out of wedlock, while Zahrah feels blameless in her socially normalised pursuit of rich husbands.

In front of Zahrah's malicious retort Wafā''s unemotional reaction and her subsequent invitation to calm down and discuss convey: her full

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[817] She is particularly envious of her cousin and his wife, despite the contraband by which they make money, and she justifies herself in front of al-Hādī saying that people evaluate you according to what you possess and not to how you obtained it. See *Ibid.* p. 39.

[818] 'Did I stray from the customary... Did I contravene traditions? Am I the first woman who wants to marry a rich man?
Is marriage not all society wants from women? [..]
– «To be honest, let me tell you that marriage in this sense becomes regulated prostitution».[..]
– «Am I a prostitute? When I express to you my desire to marry? And you, how do you call your relationship with that young man that lives with you out of wedlock?
«Wafā'» kept her self-control, she did not appear angry, as if she expected such a remark or as if she had already got used to it...' *Ibid.* p. 50.

[819] See Introduction pp. 15, 21 for Foucauldian individualisation.

consciousness of her position of non-normalised woman who expects or is accustomed to individualisation, which is a form of social and sexual devaluation that strikes her because of her unconformity;[820] her distance from Zahrah's (and her society's) patriarchal and greedy logic; her distinction from Zahrah's conformist and individualising behaviour. This is the moment of the narrative in which the two women most clearly appear as the reverse mirror image of each other and the opposite of the woman each of the two wants to be. Nevertheless Wafā' in her dislike is still respectful towards Zahrah. Zahrah instead individualises Wafā' by calling her 'mad', 'stupid', 'strange and stubborn', 'not clever',[821] because Wafā' insisted on working against her extremely wealthy ex-husband's will, was bored by perpetual sessions in beauty centres and hairdresser salons and then left him to realise her self without taking advantage of his wealth, resisting the patriarchal and greedy logic of their times.

Zahrah believes that the luxurious and indolent lifestyle Wafā' enjoyed with her ex-husband is 'the maximum to which women can aspire'.[822] She cannot possibly understand Wafā''s life choices because the prevalent image of femininity she has interiorised blinds her to any alternative and she keeps normalising herself to that image by aesthetic practices and behaviours, thus cooperating in her own subordination, as Bordo indicates.[823] Having wasted her opportunities to study and showing contempt for education, Zahrah is not trained to feel 'responsible for the universe',[824] i.e. to have an active, decisional and responsible role in the outside world. She admits that she is not courageous like Wafā' and that freedom scares her;[825] hence she would gladly leave the universe to men, to embrace not domesticity but designer clothes, beauty treatments, jewels and night clubs.

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[820] As theorised by de Beauvoir; see *Ibid.* pp. 50-1.
[821] See al-Rāyyis. *Op. cit.,* p. 51 for 'mad' and 'stupid', p. 52 for 'strange and stubborn' and 'not clever'.
[822] *Ibid.* p. 53.
[823] See Introduction p. 39.
[824] De Beauvoir's expression; see *Ibid.*p. 54.
[825] See al-Rāyyis. *Op. cit.,* pp. 55-6 in which she admits that both her father and her mother wanted their children to be educated, but they managed to be expelled from many schools; p. 37 for her derision of her female mates who spent their lives studying; p. 54 for her fear of freedom.

This mixture of greed, consumerism and materialism constitutes a novelty in her patriarchal logic and prevails on the patriarchal side of her mentality when she prefers divorce, a contravention of patriarchal norms, to the rural and humble lifestyle al-Hādī can give her, hoping to find another husband that can afford the socialite lifestyle she pursues. Zahrah pays this transgression with social individualisation, since her divorcee status is an 'infirmity' that all suitors notice.[826] Nevertheless she has interiorised so much society's power mechanisms that she considers individualisation just one of those mechanisms, which she cannot even imagine to oppose and whose functioning on the contrary she facilitates.

She is not in the least aware of society's power passing through her and relying on her to reach other members of her small social group,[827] namely al-Hādī and Wafā', to try to homogenise them and to eventually individualise them if homogenisation fails. Zahrah constantly tries to convince al-Hādī to leave his poorly paid teaching position, as others have done, and start a lucrative business and when she realises that al-Hādī will not surrender to her normalising pressure she individualises him by calling him 'loser'[828] and asks for divorce. As seen she tries the same tactic in vain with Wafā', for whom Zahrah's normalising pressure and individualisation is trivial when compared to what she underwent during her failed marriage. Her ex-husband forbade her to work, wanted to control every movement of hers, spied upon her when she was alone with Zahrah, disliked Zahrah, liked to show friends and relatives that he was 'the man of the house and that his voice is the loudest' by rudely ordering her around.[829] Wafā' extensively describes and analyses her misery with him:

لقد كان يخاف ان اشتغل فاتحرر فيخصي كان يستمد رجولته من
انفاقه عليّ وعلى البيت ومن تبذيره. . . لم يكن يشعر « بتوازنه » الا
اذا ارعد وزمجر وبذّر وعربد. . . [..]
كان يشعرني انه صاحب فضل علي وانه وليّ نعمتي وانه يستطيع ان
يرميني في الشارع متى خالفت اوامره ومتى شاء [..]

[826] See *Ibid.* p. 48.
[827] See Introduction p. 17 for Foucault's reflections about how power is exercised.
[828] This term appears several times in al-Rāyyis. *Op. cit.,* pp. 38, 40, 58, 63.
[829] See *Ibid.* pp. 51-2 for the quote and references to the ex-husband's behaviour.

- وذاق ؟ وهل بقيت لي ذات معه ؟ لقد كان يتفنن في طمس
معالمها ويحاول اطفاء بؤر الضوء فيها حتى كادت تخمد تماما 830

Showing a deep insight into her ex-husband's psyche, she had comprehended that he forbade her to work because in order to feel masculine he needed to be the one maintaining his wife and house, i.e. to fully control them financially, and to domineer his counterpart through yells, terror techniques, squandering, aggressiveness. He also used techniques to make Wafā' feel inferior to him and to destabilise her. He wanted her to feel maintained by him, owing him her wealthy lifestyle, subjected to his whims and orders and uncertain of her future. In other words he wanted Wafā' to fit his conception of femininity, which he associated with powerlessness, inferiority and subjection and considered the opposite of masculinity, which he equated with power, superiority and domination. Wafā' did not spontaneously match his conception though, hence he developed techniques to force her into it: he forbade her to work and tried to eliminate her subjectivity. Work had to be banned because by working Wafā' would have become financially independent from him, self-supporting and free from his tight control and whims, all characteristics he did not wish her to have. He also attempted to destroy her subjectivity, so that Wafā' could stand in front of him not even 'as an object paradoxically endowed with subjectivity', as de Beauvoir described women's position in front of men within patriarchal societies, but as a pure object that he could manipulate and use as he pleased. Wafā' admits that he nearly succeeded in his aim to extinguish her self's light altogether, because despite her awareness of his destructive intentions, she remained by his side for some time and was his accomplice in her own subjection, as de Beauvoir phrased it.[831] She managed to ward off her dissatisfaction with herself for a

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[830] 'He was afraid that I worked and hence liberated myself, thus he became castrated, since he was drawing his masculinity from the fact that he maintained me and the house and from his squandering... He did not feel «balanced» unless he scared, yelled, squandered, quarrelled...
[..] he made me feel that I owed him something, that he was my benefactor, that he could throw me in the streets if I disobeyed his orders and when he wanted [..]
—«My self? And was I left with a self beside him? He was an expert in eliminating its characteristics and tried to put off the spots of light within it so that it nearly died out completely'. *Ibid.* p. 52.

[831] See Introduction p. 54 for this reference and for the previous quote.

while by keeping herself busy with beauty centres, fashion, hairdressers, receptions, which were ineffective:

لكن من يؤثث خوائي؟
ومن يحميني من مواجهة نفسي؟ اذا سألتني من انت؟»
لقد خرجت من ذلك البيت الكبير بعدما تأكد لي انه أصغر من
طموحاتي وأنه بكل ترفه ورفاهته لن يستطيع تحقيق ذاتي...[832]

The luxurious lifestyle her ex-husband's money bought could not fill the void; it rather contributed to it because it hindered the fulfilment of her aspirations, which went far beyond its restricted horizons. That void became so burdensome for Wafā' that she could no longer look at herself in the mirror without feeling a 'vain doll' or 'a sheep',[833] ashamed of facing this unknown entity her self had become. She could have never realised her self remaining with her ex-husband, because in their relationship he confined her to the role of dominated object, which was too restrictive for her ambitions. Since for de Beauvoir the formation of subjectivity happens in an intersubjective reciprocal relationship between equals who, as a result, are both subjects, she could have never been a subject in the kind of relationship she had with her ex-husband, who did not recognise her as an equal subject.[834]

When Wafā' realised that her ex-husband was not capable, nor wanted, to help her realise her self, she had the courage to leave him and all his wealth behind and start anew with a new partner. From the few words Nabīl utters it appears that their relationship is established on completely new premises:

[..] أنا شخصيا لست ضد الزواج
ولكن وفاء هي التي تصرّ ان تبقى علاقتنا حرة» [..]
- «وفاء تعتبر العمل شرطا اساسيا في علاقة الرجل بالمرأة وهي
تردّد لي دائما انها لو لم تكن تشتغل لما قبلت العيش معي ابدا»[835]

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[832] 'But who furnishes my void? And who protects me from facing my self? When it asks me who are you?»
I left that big house after I realised that it is smaller than my ambitions and that with all its luxury and its opulent lifestyle it will not be able to realise my self...' Al-Rāyyis. *Op. cit.,* p. 53.
[833] These expressions are pronounced by Wafā' in *Ibid.* pp. 52, 54.
[834] See Introduction p. 52.
[835] '[..] personally I am not against marriage but Wafā' is the one that insists that our relationship remains free» [..]

Wafā' is now so keen to defend her freedom, after having been controlled by her ex-husband, that she refuses to be bound to Nabīl by marriage and to be maintained by him. She founds her new relationship on the financial independence her work gives her (she has 'a respectable position' in a bank),[836] without which she would not have accepted to start her cohabitation with Nabīl, because financial dependence would have put her again in the inferior position of kept object. She has rejected such role to stand as a subject and 'to exist sovereignly' in front of Nabīl, bearing the subject's responsibilities and hard life[837] with courage.

On his side Nabīl behaves the exact contrary of Wafā''s ex-husband. He accepts and respects the fact that Wafā' has a different viewpoint about marriage; he recognises her and allows her to develop as a subject entitled to her own opinions, work, personal space, independence; he prepares coffee for Wafā' and Zahrah and leaves them alone so that they can discuss in private; he is kind and considerate to Zahrah.[838] In short, between Nabīl and the ex-husband's there is the same negative mirroring existing between Wafā' and Zahrah, with Nabīl possessing qualities that were unknown to the ex-husband and that enable the creation of an equalitarian, intersubjective, reciprocal relationship with Wafā'.

By leaving her ex-husband, starting a professional career, becoming financially independent, and beginning a different type of relationship with a man who is the opposite of the ex-husband, Wafā' demonstrates that she 'is not a fixed reality, but a becoming'.[839] Dissatisfied with herself, she refuses to remain the object her ex-husband wanted her to be and evolves into the subject she wants to become, according to the Foucauldian 'principle of a critique and of a permanent creation of ourselves in our autonomy'.[840] She

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– «Wafā' considers the work a fundamental condition in men's relationships with women and she always repeats to me that if she had not worked she would have never accepted to live with me»'. Al-Rāyyis. *Op. cit.,* p. 54.

[836] *Ibid.* p. 54.

[837] These are the qualities de Beauvoir quotes as unexisting in the patriarchal context. See Introduction p. 54.

[838] See al-Rāyyis. *Op. cit.,* p. 50.

[839] De Beauvoir's quote; see Introduction p. 52.

[840] *Ibid.* p. 44.

also encourages Zahrah to evolve from her subdued position, to start working, supporting herself and relying on herself rather than on a man.[841]

In response Zahrah commiserates with herself because of her poor birth family and lack of education, admires herself coquettishly in the mirror and dreams of the effortless wealth her beauty will secure if she marries the businessman,[842] remaining throughout the story the personification of the marriage advertisement of the title, since she does nothing but advertising herself as suitable for marriage. She is not educated enough, sophisticated and analytical to learn from her previous experience of marriage, which failed because motivated only by financial gain, or from Wafā''s courage, voluntarily remaining fixed in her position of object on offer for marriage.

To conclude, these two short stories seem to share a common narrative strategy in the use of proper names. The two protagonists of "Al-Marāyā" are called Īmān and Jalāl when they are newly-weds and 'the fat man' and 'his wife' in the final scene. Wafā''s ex-husband has no proper name, despite being the main topic of three pages of the short story, while Nabīl has a proper name despite being a minor character. The authors seem to be using proper names for characters that they want to construct as well-distinguished individuals and generic names for characters they want to construct as generic human types. In the case of "Al-Marāyā" the switch from the proper names to the generic names might convey the transformation the couple has undergone. In their youth they were two specific individuals with uncommon aspirations, precise beliefs, high expectations; years later they are two ordinary, overweight, incommunicative spouses. In the case of "Iʿlān Zawāj" calling Nabīl by his proper name could be a way to distinguish him in his exemplarity against his social context, while the ex-husband with his generic name is only one representative of a widespread category.

The three female characters presented in these two short stories differ widely from each other. Zahrah is the subjected par excellence. The combination of poor education and shrewdness deprives her of awareness of

[841] See al-Rāyyis. *Op. cit.*, p. 54.
[842] See *Ibid.* pp. 55-6 for her memories of her birth family and p. 49 for the rest.

her subjection to social norms and desires of luxury; limits her aspirations to easily obtained, purely material prosperity; makes her believe to be cleverer than Wafā', and hence superior, because she only pursues an easy wealth through men, while Wafā' has rejected that to lead the difficult life of a subject. Her intemperance[843] enslaves her and blinds her to the immorality of her relatives' money-making practices and to her undignified position of woman-object offering herself to a keeper who can satisfy her cravings.

Īmān instead has a high level of education, awareness and intellectual maturity that she could have used to induce Jalāl to accept her as an equal subject; failing that, she had the option to divorce and start an independent life. Despite the elements favourable to both solutions, Īmān has abdicated both and remained in a relationship that reduces her to a passive object. She is therefore Jalāl's accomplice, according to de Beauvoir,[844] because she believes his lies, and once she has exposed his treachery she accepts it without any objection, tempted more by the easy life Jalāl can offer her rather than by the responsibilities of the subject. Īmān wastes all the opportunities her education, awareness and maturity give her and forsakes all her aspirations to end up in the same situation of kept woman-object pursued by Zahrah, who is deprived of all her opportunities and ambitions.

Wafā' like Īmān has a high level of education, awareness and intellectual maturity and for some time she too cooperates with her ex-husband's project to transform her into an object. When she decides to leave his opulent world and contravene social norms with her life choices she takes a stand similar to that of the ethical subject. She abstains from all unnecessary things and refuses external ideas so to free herself from their grip, to increase her authority over herself and ultimately to access her self. Wafā' does not pursue fleeting pleasure originating from ephemeral objects like Zahrah, but bliss originating within the self, satisfaction with what she is and self-appreciation, which were sorely lacking in her marriage but that she finds in her new life in which she thrives as the ethical subject she wants to be.[845]

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[843] See Introduction p. 28 for the Foucauldian/Greek concept of intemperance.
[844] See *Ibid.* p. 54.
[845] See *Ibid.* pp. 26-31 for Foucault's definition of ethical subject and technologies of the self.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUBJECTION AND THE COMMUNITY

In this last chapter the findings concerning the countries belonging to the same geographical area will be evaluated to delineate common elements and a typology of the subjects appearing in the short stories of each of the three areas, covered in three sections. The common elements and typologies of subjects of the three areas will then be compared to identify discrepancies and similarities in a fourth section. A fifth section contains general information about women's statuses in the chosen countries. The sixth section is devoted to my conclusions.

1) Disintegration of inherited subjectivities in the Levant and Egypt

The ten characters of this area's short stories have several elements in common, the most conspicuous being that eight of them are despondent and/or isolated because they are outcasts, as in the case of Sa^{c}īd's second protagonist and Amīn's characters,[846] or monologising Hamlets,[847] such as Hudā, Sa^{c}īd's other two characters and Badr's first character. Khūst's second character and the activist instead cannot be defined despondent outcasts or Hamlets because they are well integrated in several kinds of community (the political organisation, the Palestinian nation, the couple, families, groups of

[846] The femme fatale is marginalised only by women. See above pp.158-9.
[847] I am adapting O'Connor's expression; see O'Connor. *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

friends) that are integral parts of their lives, although the activist is not content with the discovery of her vulnerability in the ninth month of pregnancy.

On the contrary Saʿīd's first and third protagonists have no relationship with any community because they have left their homelands and original communities and in the new environments where they live they are not part of a community yet. The other characters instead have a conflictual relation with their communities, which, as Hafez indicated, are far from being homogeneous and traversed by a 'deep horizontal comradeship'.[848] In fact some communities individualise the protagonists, as in the case of Hudā (after the birth of her second child), Saʿīd's second protagonist, the divorcee and the prostitute, who are forced to be distinguished. Other characters want to be distinguished from their communities, as in the case of Hudā (initially, when she is convinced that 'she is not one of the herd'),[849] Badr's first character, and the femme fatale. Examining the stories of these protagonists without a community or in conflict with it, it is evident that they express either the characters' quest for chosen subjectivities, as in the case of Hudā, the Iraqi immigrant and Badr's first character, or their subjective fragmentation,[850] as in the case of the researcher, divorcee, prostitute and femme fatale, with Saʿīd's second protagonist being the only exception.[851]

Instead the stories in which the characters are integrated in some sort of community do not express such quest or subjective fragmentation, both prevented by communal integration, and the protagonists are well defined, solid subjects throughout the stories; this is the case for Khūst's second protagonist, Saʿīd's second protagonist and the activist. From this it can be deduced that marginalisation from a community, whether enacted by the community or by protagonists as self-exclusion, can cause subjective decentredness in the protagonists, as Harper proved,[852] but can also push

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[848] See above p. 57.
[849] See p. 106 above.
[850] Hafez has demonstrated that the short story is the preferred medium of objectification of both elements; see above pp. 57-8.
[851] Although she is an outcast in the British community, she has a good rapport with her husband (see Saʿīd. *Ḍarbat Qamar,* p. 135), hence she is well integrated in one kind of community, which could explain why she is a well defined, fixed, white subject and not a fragmented subject or a subjectivity seeker.
[852] Harper. *Op. cit.,* pp. 27-9.

them to seek a chosen subjectivity different from the ones their communities impose on them. In fact Hudā seeks a subjectivity distinguished from those of other women; the Iraqi immigrant prefers an uncertain subjectivity to the Iraqi rural subjectivity of her previous community; Badr's first character aspires to an alternative to stereotyped female subjectivities present in her society.

Also this causal link between marginalisation and the quest for a chosen subjectivity could be attributed to the lack of social integration and equality like the causal link between marginalisation and fragmentation.[853] In fact, although in the story there is no description of the Iraqi rural community left behind, the immigrant feels free only away from it,[854] from which it can be gathered that in that community she was treated like an inmate under constant surveillance, hence inferior, rather than like an equal subject. Also Hudā and Badr's first character are treated like inferior objects by their societies and partners.[855] Hence it seems that these characters seek non-prescriptive subjectivities away from their communities, because their communities deprive them of the intersubjective reciprocal relationships among equals needed for subjectivation.

Building on de Beauvoir's idea that subjectivity is formed in intersubjective reciprocal equal relationships,[856] these stories also seem to suggest that the degree of equality and reciprocality present in the relationships the characters have with their other, whether a partner and/or a community, affects the kinds of subjects they are, their evolution and their autonomy. The subjects appearing in these stories could be assigned to five types, which though are not to be intended as strict categories, because within each type there are variations of consciousness, evolution and autonomy:

- 'Subject subdued to the other by control and dependence'.[857] The researcher is completely under Maḥmūd/Ḥāzim's control and deprived of agency by her schizophrenic identity. Badr's first character, despite her aspirations to a chosen subjectivity, is under her partners' control. Sa°īd's

[853] See p. 159 above for the full explanation.
[854] See p. 131 above.
[855] See above pp. 108-9, 136-8.
[856] See Introduction p. 52.
[857] Foucault's definition; see *Ibid.* p. 12.

second protagonist, the divorcee and the prostitute are subjected to society's control, with the first being also a 'subject attached to [her] own identity by the consciousness or knowledge of [her] self'[858] because of her attachment to her fictitious white identity. All five protagonists are involved in interpersonal/social relations in which their counterparts treat them as inferiors: the researcher is beaten by Ḥāzim; Badr's first character is humiliated and belittled by her partners and her community; Saʿīd's second protagonist is completely avoided by white commuters; the divorcee is a danger against whom all society guards; the prostitute is excluded from wider society. They are at the lowest level of subjective evolution and they have no autonomy, as visible in their complete and unconscious subjection.

➢ Defeated subject. Hudā, who fails in her attempt to become an equal subject, is surrounded by a husband, relatives and friends that treat her as an inferior and individualise her in endless debates. She is somewhat aware of her subjectivity, fairly autonomous in the management of her sexual life, and gradually comprehends the social and familial mechanisms that subject her.

➢ Resisting subject. The activist and the femme fatale concretely and consciously resist Palestinian traditions and people, the occupation, some femininity norms. They are conscious of the fact that their level of autonomy is reduced by a form of subjection: to the biological laws of pregnancy in the activist's case; to femininity norms in the femme fatale's case.

➢ Becoming.[859] The Iraqi immigrant is a vacillating subject constructing a chosen subjectivity different from the inherited Iraqi one. The geographical transfer has enabled a leap in her subjective development and autonomy, so much so that when she becomes aware that her previous inherited subjectivity has followed her she decides to resist it concretely. The only important other in her new life is a colleague (she is not integrated in a community yet), who seem to treat her with equality.[860]

➢ Ethical subject.[861] Khūst's second protagonist during her university years had a partner who treated her as an inferior, but at the same time she had a

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[858] Foucault's definition; see *Ibid.* p. 12; [her] replaces 'his'.
[859] See *Ibid.* p. 53 for this definition shared by de Beauvoir and Foucault.
[860] See Saʿīd. *Ḍarbat Qamar,* pp. 16-7.
[861] See Introduction pp. 26-8 for Foucault's definition.

solid, equal rapport with a group of ladies that have been her close friends since school days and still remain so ten years after graduation. Her husband does not treat her as an inferior, and admires and encourages the steadfast friendship with her school mates. These equal intersubjective rapports have counteracted that previous unequal relationship, making of Khūst's second protagonist a developed and autonomous ethical subject.

2) Families as overseers in the *Panoptical* Iraqi and Gulf societies

The most conspicuous joint element of the six characters of this area's short stories is that they are all lonely and forlorn individuals despite having families. Families are actually the prime cause of their misery: al-Amīr's orphan is marginalised by her extended family (uncle, uncle's wife, aunt, female cousin); al-Amīr's ᶜAmmat Rafīq is exploited by her brother and is strictly controlled by her whole family; al-Bishr's divorcee is tormented by her husband first and then by her mother; al-Bishr's Munīrah is subjected to her husband's violence and her mother's; Sayf's Gharībah is transformed into an outcast by her father; Sayf's daughter is tormented and ultimately rejected by her mother. Being seniors and/or males, these subjecting relatives establish with the protagonists, who are juniors and females, relations of inequality that are endemic in Arab patriarchal connective systems, in which elders and males see juniors and women as extensions of themselves whose selves they can shape, as Joseph indicates.[862] The protagonists are expected to be such extentions. Nevertheless the orphan, the divorcee, Munīrah, Gharībah and the daughter refuse to be so, hence their families individualise and turn them into outcasts. They are devalued in their relatives' eyes because they do not conform to familial expectations.[863]

All the characters suffer also from social pressure and distinction to some extent. The orphan is silenced by the passers-by's examining gazes[864] and is

[862] Joseph. *Op. cit.*, pp. 459-61.
[863] This equates the devaluation striking women who do not conform to femininity norms for de Beauvoir; see Introduction pp. 50-1.
[864] See above note 530 p. 165 for definition.

aware that she will be individualised if she leaves her uncle's house.[865] ᶜAmmat Rafīq is obsessed with people's gazes and willingly distinguishes herself from women,[866] as the monologising Hamlet she is.[867] The divorcee is subjected to Khālid's examining gaze and is distinguished from other women because of divorce.[868] Munīrah is exposed to the examining gazes of the psychologist and of the shaykhs and is marked out by because of depression.[869] Once out Gharībah is watched, marked out and pressurised into doing something by passers-by.[870] The daughter is uneasy among the examining gazes of the wedding guests and marked out because of her behaviour.[871] The societies to which the protagonists belong are hence *Panoptical* societies, whose power is exerted by various overseers, whose gazes are a constant, factual presence that does not need to be interiorised, as Foucault theorised.[872]

Because of the imposed or chosen distinction present in the six stories, five of them express the two typical elements of the short story indicated by Hafez:[873] subjective fragmentation, as in the orphan's story and ᶜAmmat Rafīq's, and the quest for chosen subjectivities, as in the orphan's story, the daughter's, the divorcee's and Gharībah's.[874]

The orphan, the daughter, the divorcee and Gharībah perform their search away from their communities because by relegating them to a marginal and inferior position the communities deprive the protagonists of the intersubjective reciprocal relationships among equals needed for subjectivation.[875] In fact the orphan, the only protagonist that is fragmented

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[865] See above p. 165.
[866] See pp. 173-6 above.
[867] I am adapting O'Connor's expression; see O'Connor. *Op. cit.*, p. 25.
[868] See above p. 184.
[869] See above p. 189-90.
[870] See above pp. 196-7.
[871] See above p. 202.
[872] See Introduction pp. 20-1.
[873] See above pp. 57-8.
[874] Munīrah's story is an exception, because it presents the subjectivation others operate on her, rather than presenting Munīrah's subjectivation effort. Ultimately subjectivation for Foucault is 'the process through which the constitution of a subject, or rather of a subjectivity, is obtained' (see Introduction p. 13), which does not specify that the individual must be the initiator of her own process of subjectivation.
[875] See above p. 252 for the link I have established between the quest for subjectivities and the role of communities.

and in search of her chosen subjectivity simultaneously, states clearly that she wants to leave her uncle's house, where she is estranged, and create her self as she wants it with the help of other relatives. Nevertheless when she realises that her other relatives also relegate her to inferiority, she returns to her uncle's house, prey of subjective decentredness.[876]

The daughter has been eluding her mother all her life, running away from her first physically, then through her mental perturbation and subsequently death. This is her way to counter her mother's plan to transform a 'wild she-tiger' seeking her own happiness by sea into a tame daughter who fulfils her mother's aspirations.[877] The divorcee leaves her marital home in order to overcome the cold power relation with Aḥmad, who wants to constrain her to an inferior, subdued and cellular[878] subjectivity she rejects. She does not find any support for an alternative subjectivity in her mother, but finds support in her friend Hayā.[879] Gharībah is surrounded by a father with whom she has no reciprocal relationship and people who treat her as an inferior they can order about. All impose on her a cellular, secluded subjectivity Gharībah rejects and she leaves them to embark on her quest for a free, relational subjectivity that is interrupted by death.[880]

These unequal, non-reciprocal relations affect the kinds of subjects the characters are and their degree of evolution and autonomy,[881] classifiable as follows:

➢ Subject 'subdued to the other by control and dependence'.[882] The orphan and Munīrah are completely dependent for their survival on the people who belittle them and they have no concrete means to exit that dependence, of which nevertheless they are fully conscious. ᶜAmmat Rafīq is under the constant surveillance of her brother, of which she becomes somewhat aware. These three protagonists are the most subjected of the six, deprived of any

[876] See above pp. 165-70.
[877] See above pp. 199-206.
[878] This is one of the features of the subjectivity fabricated by discipline for Foucault; see Introduction p. 20.
[879] See above pp. 182-4.
[880] See above pp. 194-7.
[881] See above p. 252 for my explanation of the link between types of subjects, autonomy, evolution and kinds of interpersonal relations.
[882] Foucault's definition; see Introduction p. 12.

autonomy and their evolution is stalled, possibly because they are all trapped in an inferiority that reigns in all their nonreciprocal interpersonal relations.

- Resisting subject. Throughout the story the daughter successfully resists the normalised subjectivity her mother wants to impose on her by escaping her mother and demonstrates to be a fairly evolved subject by pursuing a path and showing peculiarities that are not the ones her mother expects. She is fairly autonomous from her mother, but her evolution is prevented by death.
- Becoming.[883] The divorcee and Gharībah can be defined a becoming because they considerably evolve from completely subdued subjects to resistant ones who confront the two men that confine them to inferiority and leave them. They demonstrate their subjective autonomy by severing these relationships to pursue their own paths, with Hayā's help in the divorcee's case and on her own in Gharībah's case. Gharībah in the outside world demonstrates a good level of subjective evolution in the determined manner in which she relates to others, but death prevents any further development. The level of evolution of the divorcee is instead lower, as visible in her uneasy retreat in front of Khālid.

3) Blossoming Maghrebian subjects in search of distinction

These five short stories are characterised by the protagonists' will to distinguish themselves from a female counterpart that can be a single person or a group: the granddaughter and the daughter seek distinction respectively from their grandmother and mother; Bahījah seeks distinction from her mother and other girls of her age; Īmān seeks distinction from her female acquaintances; Wafā' and Zahrah seek distinction from each other. For all protagonists, except Zahrah, the quest for distinction is a rejection of the normalised kinds of subjectivities their counterparts have in favour of chosen subjectivities[884] and a refusal of the social norms their counterparts represent because they are subjected to them. In two cases though, such quest evolves

[883] See *Ibid.* p. 53 for this definition shared by de Beauvoir and Foucault.
[884] This is recurrent in short stories, as Hafez states; see above pp. 57-8.

into an imposition. Bahījah's desire of distinction as a little girl becomes individualisation with maturity, when passers-by and relatives marginalise her for her non-conformity. Wafā"s distinction is simultaneously sought by her, who strongly rejects traditional femininity norms, and imposed through individualisation by Zahrah and all the critics of her lifestyle to whose comments she has grown accustomed.[885] On the contrary Zahrah's search for distinction from Wafā', who represents non-conformity *par excellence*, indicates that she has no wish to be a unique subject who resists social norms, but rather one of the common herd, completely subjected to social norms.

The protagonists' wish of distinction is staunchly opposed by their family members,[886] who wish the protagonists to yield to their authority of seniors and/or males. The grandmother, the fourteen-year-old's mother, Bahījah's mother, aunt and brother, Īmān's husband and Wafā"s husband are all channels of patriarchal power that relies on them to reach and subject the protagonists, making of their families the small social groups at the base of society in which power relations are formed according to Foucault.[887] Four of these seven subjecting relatives are women, who establish with juniors relations of inequality and age-based hierarchy that are endemic in Arab patriarchal connective systems, as Joseph indicates.[888] The same familial relations have already been noticed in Iraq and the Gulf countries.[889]

In order to create the inequality that makes power relations possible these subjecting characters treat their relatives as inferiors. The grandmother belittles the granddaughter's experience, knowledge and memory and despises her appearance.[890] The mother ridicules the fourteen-year-old's opposition to marriage.[891] As a child Bahījah's housekeeping skills are disparaged by her mother; as an adult her knowledge and writing skills are doubted by her brother, while her aunt and brother look down on her as if she

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[885] See above pp. 242-3.
[886] Zahrah is an exception because her family is barely mentioned and does not influence her actions or choices.
[887] See Introduction p. 17.
[888] Joseph. *Op. cit.*, pp. 459-60.
[889] See above p. 254.
[890] See above pp. 210-2.
[891] See above p. 217.

was ill.[892] Jalāl denies Īmān's (and all women's) capacity to think and their literary abilities.[893] Wafā"s husband rudely orders her around, shouts at her, forbids her to work.[894] Zahrah instead is not treated as inferior by any relative, but she has fully interiorised the inferior role her society gives women and is satisfied with it.[895]

Hence the six protagonists all suffer from degrees of inferiority in their interpersonal relations which affect the kinds of subjects they are and their degrees of evolution and autonomy,[896] classifiable as follows:

➢ Subject 'subdued to the other by control and dependence'.[897] Īmān and Zahrah are economically dependent respectively on Jalāl and the birth family, despite having the means to exit dependence, but their attitudes towards their situations are opposite. Zahrah has never been, and does not aim to become, an independent, autonomous and developed subject; she only dreams of a wealthy husband/keeper and is content with her subdued subject role. Īmān enjoyed independence and a high level of subjective autonomy and evolution before marriage and aspired to continue along the same lines after marriage, but the inferiority to which Jalāl relegates her dismantles her autonomy and evolution and makes of her a dejected Hamlet.

➢ Becoming.[898] The granddaughter and the fourteen-year-old can be defined a becoming because they both transcended respectively what the grandmother and the mother are to become more evolved subjects. However their autonomy is limited by their deep affection towards the two women and the daughter's immaturity; their evolution is limited by the absence of intersubjective reciprocal relationships between equals[899] with the two senior women, whom society has trained only to establish relations of domination and submission.[900]

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[892] See above pp. 219-22.
[893] See above pp. 232-3.
[894] See above pp. 244-5.
[895] See above p. 243-4.
[896] See above p. 252 for my explanation of the link between types of subjects and kinds of interpersonal relations.
[897] Foucault's definition; see Introduction p. 12.
[898] See *Ibid.* p. 53 for this definition shared by de Beauvoir and Foucault.
[899] Both de Beauvoir and Foucault underline the importance of such relations in subjectivation; see *Ibid.* p. 53 for de Beauvoir's contribution and pp. 29-32 for Foucault's.
[900] See Joseph. *Op. cit.,* pp. 459-60.

➢ Ethical subject.[901] Bahījah has an extreme autonomy, while her level of evolution is lower that Wafā"s because after her father's death she does not enjoy intersubjective reciprocal relationships that allow her to develop further and to love herself. Wafā' evolves enormously from a subdued subject to an ethical subject and demonstrates her subjective autonomy and development by severing her unequal marital relationship to pursue her aspirations. Her equal intersubjective rapport with Nabīl offsets her marriage and allows her to achieve the subjective accomplishment of which Bahījah and the other four protagonists are deprived.

4) A typology of subjects

The most conspicuous common feature the twenty-two protagonists of the twenty-one stories examined share is despondency. Whether or not they are the outcasts or Hamlets that people short stories as per O'Connor's suggestions,[902] the majority of protagonists are forlorn individuals, with the activist, Khūst's second protagonist and Wafā' as the only content ones. Despondency is caused primarily by families for all characters of the Gulf stories (the orphan, ᶜAmmat Rafīq, al-Bishr's divorcee, Munīrah, Gharībah, Sayf's daughter), for five of the Maghrebian stories (the granddaughter, the fourteen-year-old, Bahījah, Īmān, Wafā'[903]), and for three of the Levantine stories (Hudā, the researcher, Badr's first character), for some of whom society is a secondary cause. For the other protagonists of the Levantine stories (Saᶜīd's second protagonist, the Iraqi immigrant, Amīn's three characters) society is the prime cause.

In the Levantine stories the relatives who cause misery are all men, while in the Gulf and Maghrebian stories they are half men, half elder women. The orphan, Munīrah, the daughter, the granddaughter, the fourteen-year-old and Bahījah face elder female relatives, who unconsciously play the role of

[901] See Introduction pp. 26-8 for Foucault's definition.
[902] See *Ibid.* pp. 56-7
[903] Wafā', a content ethical subject by the story's end, was miserable because of her husband.

'channels of power' through whom patriarchal power passes and on whom it relies to reach and affect younger women. Older women do so not because power is forced on them,[904] but because in their youth the expectation of inheriting seniors' power encouraged them to interiorise classic patriarchy.[905] Families in these stories are environments in which 'persons with diffuse boundaries, responding to and requiring the involvement of others' are produced with the support of connectivity, so that patriarchal power is facilitated in gaining control of such persons.[906]

Hence the families described in these stories, except the activist's family, Khūst's second protagonist's and Wafā''s, epitomise the small social groups at the base of society in which power relations are formed to then affect all society, as Foucault theorised.[907] Consequently social mechanisms reflect familial ones and the communities to which twenty protagonists belong are examining groups in the Foucauldian sense: they simultaneously closely observe the protagonists, classify and punish their differences from the norm, normalise or individualise them.[908] In these *Panoptical* societies gazes do not even need to be interiorised as Foucault said, because gazes are an actual and constant presence.

Only the activist and Khūst's second protagonist are placed within inclusive communities that do not individualise them; they also are, together with Wafā,' the only content protagonists and they have in common three elements: university degrees, an active life (work, political activities), harmonious rapports with their chosen partners. They are, with Sa^{c}īd's second protagonist, also among the few characters who do not express the quest for chosen subjectivities or subjective fragmentation, which for Hafez are typical of short stories[909] and rife in most stories of the three areas. Their exceptionality could be attributed to their integration in some form of community/couple,[910] which makes of them well-defined, solid subjects: the

[904] Which reflects Foucault's reflections about power; see Introduction p.17.
[905] See Kandiyoti. 'Bargaining with Patriarchy', p. 279.
[906] Joseph. *Op. cit.*, p. 460.
[907] See Introduction p. 17.
[908] See *Ibid.* pp. 20-1 for examination, individualisation, *Panopticon*'s mechanism.
[909] See above pp. 57-8.
[910] See above p. 252 for my explanation of this link.

activist is a resistant subject, Khūst's second character and Wafā' are ethical subjects, Saᶜīd's second protagonist is a fixed, white subject. Other two exceptions are Zahrah, whose level of subjective evolution is too low to feel any non-material need, and Munīrah, whose subjectivation is accomplished by her communities rather than by herself. All the other sixteen protagonists instead express either their quest for chosen subjectivities or their experience of fragmentation.

Another factor shared by almost all stories is the protagonists' distinction from their communities, which is typical of short stories for Hafez,[911] but while for Hafez distinction is the protagonists' fundamental need of being distinguished as unique and special individuals, some short stories prove that distinction can also be imposed by communities through individualisation. The characters who need distinction throughout the stories (Badr's first character, ᶜAmmat Rafīq, the granddaughter, the fourteen-year-old, Īmān) are hindered within the Arab patriarchal connective systems in which they live, 'in which the family or community is more valued than the person' and persons see 'others as extensions of themselves and themselves as extensions of others'.[912] In fact the others, who are males and/or seniors, are accustomed to regard the protagonists as extensions of themselves they can direct, and not to consider them unique individuals; hence they mistake their need for insubordination that they must stop and punish.

For some protagonists (the divorcee, the prostitute, the orphan, al-Bishr's divorcee, Munīrah, Gharībah, the daughter) distinction is throughout the stories an imposition of their families and/or societies that mark them out through individualisation, which is a disciplinary sanction that punishes their non-conformity to their families' expectations and/or to the femininity norms of their societies.[913] Similarly distinction is a disciplinary sanction also for Hudā, the femme fatale, Bahījah and Wafā', for whom distinction starts as a personal need and ends as an imposition or is simultaneously a need and a social imposition. When they insist too much on their need to be unique and special

[911] See above p. 57.
[912] Joseph. *Op. cit.*, p. 456, 452.
[913] See Introduction pp. 15, 21 for individualisation and disciplinary sanction.

individuals at the expense of their conformity to familial/social norms, their families/societies discipline them. There are only three characters who do not seek distinction. The researcher has no community from which to seek distinction, since she is out of any community. The activist and Khūst's second protagonist are well integrated within their communities, hence they do not feel the need of distinction.

As regards the types of subject the protagonists are, the ones recurring in the stories examined are as follows:

- 'Subject subdued to the other by control and dependence'.[914] This type constitutes half of Levantine and Gulf characters and one third of Maghrebian protagonists. Their Other treats them as inferiors and keeps them under a control that divests them of autonomy. Most of these subjects have little consciousness of their subjection and cooperate in it, even if some attempt to fight it, albeit they always capitulate. They are the least evolved subjects.
- Defeated subject. Hudā, the only representative of this type, is slightly more developed than the subjected subjects because she is very aware of her social and familial subjection and constantly disputes it. Nonetheless she mostly cooperates in her subjection, which remains a constant in all her life.
- Resisting subject. This type constitutes one fifth of Levantine protagonists and one sixth of Gulf ones, whose subjective development is one step ahead of the previous two types'. They do not cooperate in their subjection and strenuously resist subjecting Others without surrendering, although with unknown results and aims. Resistance is their way of life.
- Becoming.[915] This type constitutes one third of Gulf and Maghrebian characters and one tenth of Levantine ones. They have evolved more than the resistant subjects because they have overcome their prescriptive subjectivities and aim at new subjectivities.
- Ethical subject.[916] This type constitutes one tenth of Levantine protagonists and one third of Maghrebian ones. Their subjective evolution is the highest because they have forsaken prescriptive subjectivities and chosen

[914] Foucault's definition; see *Ibid.* p. 12.
[915] See *Ibid.* p. 53 for this definition shared by de Beauvoir and Foucault.
[916] See *Ibid.* pp. 26-8 for Foucault's definition.

and constructed new and autonomous subjectivities. They enjoy full mastery over themselves, unaffected by the subjection some of them have previously experienced.

5) Statuses of women

This section provides a quick overview of how women living in the countries considered in this thesis fare in several sectors: education, political rights and participation; family, personal status and labour laws; employment.

Governments have successfully increased female school enrolment in the last few years. Nevertheless girls' enrolment rates at all levels of education are still lower than boys' in most countries, except Emirates, Tunisia, Lebanon and Palestine, where girls' combined gross enrolment rates for all levels of education are higher than boys'. Girls' enrolment rates lower as girls progress through the different levels. At primary level the rates in all countries, except Morocco, are above 90%, but they plummet below 40% at higher education level, the only exceptions being Emirates (slightly above 50%) and Lebanon (48%), with Moroccan rates being always the lowest of the group.[917] Despite being underrepresented at all levels, female students' performance is superior to that of male students in several countries.[918] The governmental efforts to increase girls' enrolment have not however eradicated adult women's illiteracy, which is still a major issue for all countries. Only in Palestine and Emirates illiteracy rates are slightly over 10%, but in the other countries they are well over 20%, peaking at 60% in Morocco's case.[919]

Extreme differences exist also in the field of political and legal rights. At one end of the spectrum there is Saudi Arabia, where national elections have never taken place and political rights are severely curtailed for both women

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[917] Data drawn from United Nations Development Programme. Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development. *The Arab Human Development Report 2005: the Rise of Women in the Arab World.* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Arab States, 2005), pp. 75-9.

[918] See *Ibid.* pp. 80-4 for data.

[919] Data drawn from United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 2007/2008: Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World.* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 334-7.

and men. Nevertheless women are more penalised, because in the first municipal elections (2005) women were not allowed to vote. There are instead countries where women have been eligible to vote and to stand for election since the 1950's (Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Tunisia), 1960's (Morocco), and 1980's (Iraq). However in Lebanon, Syria and Morocco women's actual presence in parliament has been none for decades, despite the important role Moroccan women played in the struggle for liberation, and is still now paltry in Lebanon and Egypt, slightly over 10% in Morocco and Syria, while it has overcome 20% in Tunisia and Iraq. In the Emirates instead, where women have been eligible to vote and to stand for election only since 2006, women now constitute 22.5% of the Federal National Council.[920] Women have been covering ministerial roles in all countries of the group, except Saudi Arabia, in some cases since the 1950's (Iraq and Egypt). However these women's access to high political positions 'does not necessarily mean women's political empowerment'.[921] They can be used as window dressing by ruling regimes or are chosen not because of their abilities, but because of their loyalty to the ruling clique within political systems plagued by corruption and clientelism.

As regards personal status and family codes, Tunisia and Morocco are ahead of the other countries because they both have unified codes and because they have set provisions that are more progressive and less discriminatory against women that the rest of the countries. The Tunisian codes promulgated in the 1950's and subsequent amendments, which are applicable to all Tunisians, have: abolished polygamy; granted wives and husbands equal access to divorce and guardianship over children; abolished wives' duty to obey husbands; established for both spouses the duty to maintain the family (if the wife has money), treat each other kindly, cooperate in childcare and household management. The Moroccan civil code, also introduced in the 1950's and revised later, has: restricted polygamy; abolished wives' duty to obey husbands; raised the eligible marriage age; granted women the right to divorce under certain circumstances; established the

[920] Data taken from United Nations Development Programme. *Op. cit.*, pp. 343-6.
[921] UNDP. Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development. *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

principle that spouses jointly run the family; transformed divorce into a legal procedure.

Other states, such as Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, have no unified personal status codes and others have unified personal status codes only for Muslims. The personal status laws in these countries are heavily based on *fiqh* and vary slightly according to the school of jurisprudence prevailing in the country, albeit they all discriminate against women in public and private spheres. Such laws establish: wives' duty to obey husbands and to ask their permission to work and travel; husbands' absolute rights to repudiation, without justification and court proceedings, and to children's custody and guardianship; wives' rights to petition a court for divorce (only with specific justifications), custody of children and financial support from husbands. The various attempts to modernise these laws have not achieved an equal distribution of rights between spouses, because they aimed only at curtailing the worst discriminating practices, not at eliminating discrimination against women. Even in countries which grant women considerable rights, a prevalent social tendency to disapprove of women who resort to legal procedures for family matters might discourage them from pursuing their legal rights.

In the field of labour legislation most states guarantee women's equal right to work, legal protection on the workplace, right to maternity leave, etc. However there are provisions, which governments present as measures to protect women, that considerably restrict their right to work. In Saudi Arabia women are prohibited from working in any field but female education and nursing and from associating with men on the workplace. Even in more progressive countries there are provisions that prohibit women from working in certain sectors and at night, without forgetting that women living in most Levantine and Gulf countries need their husbands' permission to work. Hence the equal right to work theoretically granted by most states is in practice curtailed by discriminating legal provisions, or by the lack of legal protection in some sectors, such as temporary, seasonal, domestic and agricultural work, in which a large part of working women are employed.

Despite the fact that women's educational achievements are higher than those of men, which means that they are more skilled and potentially more

productive, women's unemployment rates are disproportionately higher in comparison to men's in all countries considered, with Egypt having the highest (about 450%) and Palestine the lowest (about 50%).[922] This disproportion seems to be due to the region's slow economic growth, which generates few jobs, combined with the traditional view of men as breadwinners that induces employers to favour men for the few jobs available. Discriminating labour, family and personal status laws, paucity of childcare providers, high reproductive rates all contribute to hinder Arab women's participation in economic activities, which, despite a 19% increase in 1990-2003, is still the lowest in the world (33.3%).[923]

6) From silent subjection to vocal resistance

The aims of this thesis, set in the introduction and in the first section of chapter one, are: to increase the insufficient knowledge of women's literary production by overcoming the phase of the history of literature, enlarging the countries considered beyond the usual ones, considering less famous and less translated writers; to problematise the marginality of the short story genre and of its female practitioners; to prove the value of women's contributions to the genre through a structural analysis of their short stories; to surmount the archetype of Arab women as victims by focussing on the unexplored topic of subjectivity.

This thesis has achieved the aforesaid goals. The twenty-one short stories analysed in chapters two-four conspicuously enlarge the existing knowledge of Arabic short stories written by women and are fairly representative geographically, temporally and stylistically. The stories represent nine countries from the three main areas of the Middle East, some of which are established producers of the genre and attract more critical attention than the relatively new producers, which nevertheless have been

[922] These are female unemployment rates as percentages of male unemployment rates. Data for all Arab countries available in *Ibid.* p. 86.
[923] *Ibid.* p. 88.

prolific contributors in the last twenty years. The stories have been written between the 1960's and the first decade of the 21st century by mostly modernist writers belonging to the sixties-nineties generations. Such variety shows how the modernist short story has evolved from the early timidity to the bold stylistic experiments of younger writers. The inclusion of Sayf's stories expands the representativeness of the samples beyond modernism by including also magical Gulf realism.

The writers' few biographical details prove that they are important women in their communities because of their education, art and posts despite their literary marginality. The section of chapter one devoted to the development of the short story proves that women have been contributing to the development of the genre and to its status of prominent genre in most countries examined, despite the critical neglect that still plagues it. The overviews of the main features of each writer's short story production are intentionally brief in order to devote most of each writer's section to the close reading of the stories, which I deem the best way to probe into a writer's artistry and narrative strategies and to produce a critique that avoids the facileness of history of literature.

In my close readings (chapters two-four) I have dealt with the aesthetic quality of the short stories in two ways. Firstly I have employed the many heuristic tools elaborated by O'Connor, Hafez, Genette, Barthes and Harper to delve into: characters' roles, expressive needs, experiences of fragmentation, efforts of subjectivation; *histoire* and *récit*; focalisation and narrator's role; narrative levels and events' order and speed, etc. Secondly I have traced the influences of Poe, Chekhov and Joyce in the narrative techniques adopted by the authors, such as intense recounting bordering dramatisation, ambiguous sensorial perception, the structuring of the story around an apparently petty event with sweeping and dramatic implications, the presentation of aesthetic experience as conducive to true reality, hazy mixture of psychic reality and external reality, epiphany. This is my way to judge the structural and artistic value of women's contributions in an analytical manner rather than issuing unsubstantiated value judgements on the stories.

My close readings, focussed on female subjects, have dug out several images of Arab women that contradict the universalised category of the

voiceless victim, which appears in very few stories. Even among the ten subjects 'subdued to the other by control and dependence'[924] or the defeated subject the voiceless victims are only the divorcee, the prostitute, Īmān and Zahrah, the only characters who never verbalise or materialise any opposition to subjection, while the other seven in these two groups express in words and/or deeds their opposition to a subjection they are not ready to accept without fighting, albeit in vain. All the other eleven resistant, becoming and ethical subjects are far from being voiceless victims because they do not consider subjection an incontrovertible aspect of femininity and they demonstrate outstanding resilience to it and eagerness to fight it, elements that by their mere existence debunk patriarchal assumptions about women's weakness, vulnerability and helplessness. Women writers hence succeed in utilising their position of women, who are simultaneously insiders and outsiders in the nation and the culture,[925] to challenge the allegedly universal victim stereotype and construct multiple images that sometimes are in dialectical opposition with each other. They also subtly challenge the Arab patriarchal systems in which they live, which tend to privilege males and seniors and value the family or community more than the person,[926] by selecting as protagonists young women and children and by giving in their works a prominent, positive role to individuals and a secondary, often negative, role to families and communities.

To aptly serve the purposes of this thesis it has been necessary to combine the various paradigms expounded in the introduction with short story theories and to integrate them with some personal contributions. Through the analysis of de Beauvoir's texts and Foucault's three shared elements have been unearthed: both philosophers reject a deterministic bond between sex and the subject, define the subject a becoming that perpetually transcends her/himself, and consider subjectivation happening in reciprocal relationships with others. I have used this shared conception of subjectivation and the data drawn from the short stories to explain the causal link Harper found between

[924] Foucault's definition; see Introduction p. 12.
[925] I am paraphrasing a sentence by Hafez quoted in full on p. 60 above.
[926] As indicated in Joseph. *Op. cit.*, p. 456.

marginality and subjective fragmentation as due to the absence of reciprocal equal relationships with others, which are made impossible by marginality, which entails exclusion and inferiority, rather than inclusion and equality. Such marginality can also push characters to seek chosen subjectivities different from the ones marginalising communities offer, while integration in a community seems to prevent this outcome and subjective fragmentation. Hence effort of subjectivation and experience of fragmentation, typical of short stories for Hafez, are absent in the short stories with characters well integrated in their communities. From the analysis of the stories have emerged two elements: two types of subject (the defeated and the resistant ones) not indicated by Foucault and de Beauvoir; distinction is not always a need, as Hafez has indicated, but can also be a community's imposition. Those personal contributions have integrated the chosen theoretical approaches, whose combination supplies an exhaustive range of interpretative keys with which texts have been opened up to unearth subjective and power dynamics and narrative structures with a depth that none of the paradigms would have reached if used on its own.

I would have liked to include other countries in this thesis, if time and the word limit had allowed it and if gathering the collections had not been the hard task it revealed itself to be. Sometimes the choice of an author over another has been dictated more by the availability of her collections than by any other consideration. This is particularly true for younger authors, whose existence was ignored by the publishing houses represented at 2007 Beirut Book Fair. This anecdote seems to confirm that women writers are marginalised within some countries, as already seen in chapter one. This topic could be a possible object of further research that could give a current comprehensive picture of women writers' statuses within their literary fields and investigate if and how those statuses are affected by: the diffusion of internet, which has allowed writers to circumvent some of the old dynamics of the fields and post their works on various websites; the increasing education levels of both writers and reading public; the extremely fast modernisation of Gulf countries; globalisation.

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[927] I have used the second edition.
[928] Zaydān. *Op. cit.,* p. 103 quotes different place of publication and publisher: Bayrūt: Dār al-Ādāb.
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Appendix